

DOCTORAL THESIS

Competitive ballroom dancing as a social phenomenon an anthropological approach

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**Competitive Ballroom Dancing as a Social Phenomenon:
an Anthropological Approach**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD

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The Abstract

The following investigation develops a critique of Competitive Ballroom Dancing as a social phenomenon from an anthropological perspective and that of a non-dancer. In order to do this the thesis is concerned with interrelating dance with anthropology. The concepts of how people express themselves and communicate in society provide the study with the scope to explore certain issues.

The first aspect shows how a person would prepare to be a dancer in competition, this involves, among other things, learning to dance, finding a suitable partner and the overall appearance of the dancer.

Secondly looking at competition, which involves sport and dance, judgement and perception of how the dancers and spectators view it. The embodied content of the competitive dancer is seen as an important issue, since it can affect how the dancers dance and how the dance is perceived, despite the fact that competitive ballroom dancing is such a highly formal, structured and rule-governed form of dance.

Ritual and performance theories integrating emic and etic tendencies are juxtaposed with what appears to happen in this form of dance. In addition various types of altered state of mind are examined, in view of comments made by dancers about how they feel when dancing.

Furthermore this thesis explores an understanding of how important this form of dancing is to its participants and how the activity can be a life-long pursuit whether as a dancer or subsequently as a spectator. It also illustrates the extent to which younger people enjoy an activity where there is great emphasis on being fit and how they have come to link it with sport.

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'I have brought you to the ring, dance according to your skill.'

William Wallace, before the Battle of Falkirk, 22nd July 1298.

Introduction:

The knowledge and practice of dancing may fairly be said to be as universal as any non-instinctive human activity. Yet according to a number of writers, including most notably the philosopher Graham McFee, the demand for a definition of dance is 'neither helpful nor possible' (McFee 1992:15). Dance has as many genres as it has names, with diverse components in any dance performance, so it is not immediately obvious how dance in general may be discussed. McFee stresses that in understanding dance it is important to distinguish between the artistic and the aesthetic judgement, the former being the search for purpose or function while the latter is concerned purely with pleasure in beauty and all things connected therewith.

When one looks at ballroom dancing from an aesthetic viewpoint its main objective is to give pleasure during it to those performing and/or those who watch them, but when the purposive element is introduced in the form of competition the question of artistic function comes to light, and there is an end, an aim. It is of course possible that even in the presence of function there is an accompanying aesthetic experience for both participants and onlookers. This thesis, however, is an anthropological exercise, and has as its objective a study of the way in which dance can affect the participants. In consequence I shall not be paying much attention to the philosophical aspects of aesthetic, but rather concentrate on the examples of such writers as Adrienne Kaeppler, a dance anthropologist, who uses 'the concept of evaluation (rather than beauty) as the basic principle of aesthetics.' (2003:153). Included in the evaluation are the standards by which judgements are made, and these are largely determined by the cultural tradition of which they are part.

I grew up in a society where dancing tended to play an important part in social life. I found myself gradually becoming interested in dancing competitions (Competitive Ballroom Dancing, CBD), but from afar. It was only in middle age that I began to realize that an anthropological approach to the subject might be rewarding. This was partly due to such programmes as *Come Dancing* (1949-1995) on British television. Then more recently, while living in the South Pacific, I took to watching the programme on Australian TV, where it receives a presentation of such intensity that I became progressively more intrigued by the human issues involved. After a time Australian friends and relatives recommended me to see Baz Luhrmann's film *Strictly*

Ballroom (1992), which I did and thoroughly enjoyed. This, though ostensibly a satirical comedy, highlighted (and, as I was to find later, did not inordinately exaggerate) the part the pursuit played in the lives of its participants. I became even more eager to find out whether CBD incorporated patterns of action, which have social significance and could be extrapolated in the interpretation of various aspects of social behaviour.

Ballroom (an aspect of social) dancing as we know it probably had its beginnings around the time of the Italian Renaissance. Before this, dancing for pleasure had in Western Europe been fairly spontaneous, and whatever conventions it acquired grew up through practice rather than through arbitrary regulation. 'BD developed from the standardisation of steps by dance teachers – most of them English- in the early 20th century' (Buckman 1978:13). This would represent the kernel of competitive dancing as it is practised nowadays, where dancers dance some of the conventional ballroom dances in competition against other dancers. Buckman and other authorities nevertheless do acknowledge that courtiers in the 15th century were likewise constantly competing with each other at the *basse dance*, a French term which refers to a group of fifteenth century dances. Usually these were dignified walking dances, moving rhythmically to music and typically following a set sequence of steps. They are considered to have been precursors of the minuet (Craine and Mackrell 2002).

Contemporary CBD is where couples, and/or teams, and even towns, compete against each other mainly in two distinct styles of dance. One is Ballroom dancing, which has in the past been known as the modern or standard style, and the other is known as the Latin style. The waltz, quickstep, tango and slow foxtrot comprise the standard Ballroom repertory. Latin dancing comprises the rumba, samba, cha-cha, paso-doble and jive, of which the last-mentioned can be considered additional though it is often found in the finals. Usually the competitions start off with twenty-five couples in each heat. They dance all four dances, then after eliminations in several heats the numbers are brought down to the last six couples in the final heat. These heats are quite short, each may last for just two or three minutes, depending on the event and the venue, and as a result of this the dancers have to find additional ways of attracting the judges and impressing them. Essentially, when it comes to the final rounds of the competitions those who are judged the best dancers will win, although at the beginning of the competitions dancers may often find various ways other than their dancing performances, for example their appearance and the entries they make

as they walk out into the dance arena, for drawing favourable attention from the judges.

Dance and Society

It was in the 1960s that researchers such as John Blacking and Drid Williams really began formally to study dance from the perspective of anthropology, although earlier Gertrude Kurath had, without any training in anthropology, coined the term *dance ethnology*, that she used as an alternative to the anthropology of dance. Her defined goal for her research was 'an approach toward, and a method of eliciting the place of dance in human life' (1960: 250).

Many researchers who have embarked on the study of dance have complained of the lack of serious attention to it in the past, examined the reason for its earlier neglect in anthropology and explored the popularity it is gaining at present (John Blacking 1985; Ted Polhemus 1993; Susan Reed 1998; Paul Spencer 1985; Andrew Ward 1993; William Washabaugh 1998 and Helena Wulff 2001). There have been many points of departure which could be used to describe the nature and meaning of dance. The most important of these, and the most motivating reason for most of the anthropological research, has been the connection between dance and society.

To understand the nature of the connection between dance and society, one has to bear in mind that dance is always shaped by social and cultural, and even physical factors. Andrée Grau, as a dance anthropologist, argues that 'there is no such thing as a natural body, there is no archetypal body, but rather bodies, all are culturally and socially constructed' (1993:21). Polhemus, an anthropologist, says that 'culture in its broadest sense is embodied in the form of physical culture and this in turn is stylised and schematised in the form of dance' (1993: 4-11). He also states that, 'People create dance, thus turning dance into the metaphysics of culture' (1993:8). Ray Birdwhistell (1970) who has studied kinesics in detail claims that posture, gestures, basic movements and physical tensions vary in different societies and are quite resistant to change. Thus dance has been claimed to be a tool 'most appropriate to the study of any specific situation or society' (Spencer 1985: 38): a claim that will receive attention later in this work.

As the German social anthropologist Heike Weischiolek (2003) suggests, the methodological consequences of statements like that imply that one has to know the cultural context in order to understand a given form of dance. In other words,

movements and postures in dance generate their meaning from the context in which they are performed and are only comprehensible within this context. The intention of the present work, however, is not to embark on anything so ambitious as to embrace a whole study of the significance of human movement, but simply to explore such activity in relation to a single but revealing facet of human recreation. Nonetheless, it is possible for even a limited study such as the present one to make a meaningful contribution to understanding. The study of forms and practices of dance can provide a deeper understanding of a given society, extending even towards unexpected fields because of this close connection between culture and dance. 'Developments in dance can be understood as reflections of trends in the economic and social spheres' (Klein 1992:279). Some authors, such as Judith Lynn Hanna, describe dance as 'language-like' (1988:13-15) and claim that as a 'physical instrument or symbol for feeling and/or thought ...sometimes it is more effective than verbal language in revealing needs and desires...The dance medium often comes into play when there is a lack of verbal expression' (1987:4). Thus ideas or feelings that cannot (yet) be articulated in speech can be expressed collectively through dance (Blacking 1985; Archetti 1999; and Polhemus 1993).

Although a particular dance may be viewed as closely related to a particular culture, it can be transferred from one culture to another. This has been felt by some to be simply a matter of imitation (Wieschiolek 2003). I suggest that this is more likely to be a matter of adaptation to the society into which it has been introduced. For example, the tango, which is said to have originated in the bordellos of Argentina, in the 1920s became popular in Paris, but was changed in order to be more acceptable to the ballrooms of France. To quote Philip Richardson, the highly respected dance historian, "M. André de Fouquières, the arbiter of fashion and good taste in Parisian ballrooms" (1960:101) had "played a big part in taming the Argentine Tango to make it a dance fit for the best Parisian society." (1960:102) Consequently, this style has persisted in Europe and in the United States until quite recently, when the Argentinian tango in its original form has begun to be taught in dance studios all over Europe. However, the Parisian style is still the accepted one in dance competitions.

Wulff, Archetti and Blacking have all stated in their own way that 'dance can not only be shaped by society, but also that society can be influenced by dance' (Wulff:2001: 5). Archetti says that dance can 'permit the articulation of languages and practices that can challenge an official and puritanical public domain' (1999:18). On the other

hand, Blacking argues that dance changes people's minds and consequently their conditions of life:

Performances of dance and music frequently reflect and reinforce existing ideas and institutions, but they can also stimulate the imagination and help to bring coherence to the sensuous life, "an intelligence of feeling" ... that, in turn can affect motivation, commitment, and decision making in other spheres of social life (1985: 65).

However, as Weischiolek says 'we have to be cautious about the functionalist approach to dance' (2003:117) as in the past it has been described variously as a safety valve, as an organ of social control, a tool for education, the transmission of culture or as a means of resistance or escapism as cited in Spencer (1985). The most common explanation for the function of dance in a Western context is the notion of dance as providing a meeting-place for potential marriage partners (Ward 1993). These functionalist approaches to dance point to the fact that the 'essential non-rationality of dance' (Ward 1993: 18) may be somewhat frightening for scholars who feel the need to explain the irrational. Carl Whittman states:

Dancing is intact and self-sufficient – and all the struggling to find proper meaning is only necessary because we have been so brainwashed by our social and sexual conditioning. I believe that dancers are not so symbolic in some sort of way - they are not representational of some greater truth (1987:85).

Overview

The focus of this thesis will be Competitive Ballroom Dancing, which takes place in a number of places, including British Universities, where it was described by Mat Smith of the *Daily Telegraph* (2003) 'as successful as a pastime and perhaps as more than that, as one of the fastest-growing leisure pursuits'. Robin Short, a professional dancer and dance judge, said that this is occurring not only in the United Kingdom: it is also seen in such conspicuously non-Western countries as China where it is increasing in popularity. In 2002 at a national contest at Shenzhen there were over 2000 competitors coming from 30 different provinces (*Dance News* 2003). Generally in the British media CBD tends to be portrayed as rather an unpolished and pretentious occupation favoured principally by people like unemployed plumbers and trainee hairdressers.

The central aim of this thesis is to contribute, from a social anthropological perspective, to the ethnography of dance. In particular my aim is to show that CBD,

little understood and appreciated by those who do not practice or perform it or form its audience, is a rich social and cultural practice. The focus will be an ethnographic study of a variety of forms of CBD. I do not wish to make any claim to theoretical originality. Here, a range of theoretical perspectives, have been brought into service in order to bring about an interpretation of an event. As with many social anthropological works, the intention here is to attempt to explore, understand and interpret through participant observation. Although I did (in part) learn to dance to understand what it was to dance ballroom dancing, the main work of this research was the close engagement with the university teams who led me into the world and developed my understanding of it.

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology: learning to dance

I have, as a social anthropologist, been trained in several methods of research. Probably the most widely used method is that of participant observation, but one method also used is interviewing informants and using questionnaires if appropriate. Studying the relevant literature in order to be able to compare and evaluate one's own data as well as those of other workers is not only a preliminary but an ongoing necessity. Television programmes and some films have proved unexpectedly enlightening and photographs taken by an expert photographer have been made available to me and proved especially informative about dress, gesture and posture. I have also been lucky enough to get access to some archival material and personal letters or diaries were also consulted. Internet chat-rooms can often be revealing, though often of the more unusual views and pet prejudices of dancers and their followers. As these did not always seem central to the main direction of my research, they have only sparingly been used.

Participant observation became my main method of research. In using this method of research, I believe that it is initially important to establish such things as whether, in the natural setting of the population, it would be suitable for long-term fieldwork, that is, whether the researcher can return at a later date to follow up the findings. In addition to deciding whether those being observed would be able to accept in their midst an outsider who would see all their positive and negative activities, and to make sure that they would understand the researcher's ethical code and work practices as well as the projected aim of the research. Obviously the work method of each researcher is different, but these are the rules that I felt should be followed.

Observation is not merely looking at the population but also is observing it for a purpose. "Thick description", a term first used by Clifford Geertz in 1973, represents how the observations should include where the voices, feelings, actions and meanings are heard and recorded. The participation element of this type of research can be complicated if the researcher becomes too involved in the activity as it may then be difficult to remain unbiased in the research. In view of this I thought that it

was necessary to discuss the findings with those of my informants who were not actually involved with my study groups. Pierre Bourdieu also notes that there are problems and asks “How can we at once be both subject and object, the one who acts and the one who, as it were, watches himself acting?” (Bourdieu:2003:281).

Whilst observing and participating I normally sat in a position, which, while not being intrusive on the dancers or spectators, was easily accessible to them. As a result of this at the Oxford competitions many of the dancers, their friends and families spoke to me, and at times I was also asked to help with the finishing touches to the clothing and other matters such as putting on the numbers and even checking the scoring of the judges. At Blackpool it was much more difficult as people were less accessible and more reluctant to be interviewed. Nevertheless, in spite of my informants saying that they did not want to be interviewed they would sit and discuss many points relevant to my research. Certain informed people at Blackpool were targeted and arrangements were made to see them when it was convenient. It was less easy to participate as it is a very formal occasion, although I did help one or two of the women with their clothing.

At the beginning of my research I obtained from the British Dance Council, the governing body of CB dances in the United Kingdom, the addresses of dance schools, teachers, and newspapers associated with dance and so forth. However, there were issues centring round finance, and the ‘political’ aspects of the dance system, which the Council felt unable to discuss with me. This was an aspect which cropped up quite often in my research; it was hinted at often enough, but no one really wanted to discuss these topics in detail. When such matters were raised a number of people would quite frequently say, ‘Please do not quote me’. One person did elaborate by saying ‘There is the matter of the Inland Revenue’, thereby hinting that maybe people do not declare their real incomes - quite a number of people such as teachers are self-employed. Interpersonal relationships almost certainly have an affect on judging, and the internal politics of the ballroom dance world seemed to me too convoluted even to be open to speculation. These ethical considerations were in the first place discussed with the staff of the Dance Council and then later with the informants I met. With some, as mentioned above, there were those unwilling to have their names disclosed, while others did not see this as a problem. In one case I felt that it would be better not to mention the name of an informant although he or she did not say not to. As time went on my main informants not only shared in some of my interpretations of what appeared to be happening but also tended to add their

thoughts on how they perceived them. There remained, however, a great deal of official restraint, this was not expressed in a hostile fashion but much more in an elusive way such as people promising to come back to me, not doing so, and then when I tried to contact them again not being available. Interestingly, Helen Thomas and Nicola Miller, sociologists, also found when interviewing ballroom dancers that 'They proved to be very skilled at thwarting any attempts to engage in a semi-structured interview in a structured setting, preferring just to chat "off the record"' (1997: 93).

With regard to analysing the data, I have sought to identify and describe patterns and themes from the perspective of the participants and then attempt to understand and explain these patterns and themes. During analysis the data were organised categorically and chronologically and reviewed repeatedly (cf. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman 1995). The informants served as a check by forcing me to review my thoughts as a result of their comments throughout the analysis process. This was done principally by informal discussions, in person where possible and by letter where informants were not easily accessible. I was careful to verify later any outright statements of opinion and to check statements of fact by later questioning.

All the photographs used in this thesis were taken at the Blackpool Dance Festival. They are used, however, not only as illustrations of the festival, but also with the aim of pointing out relevant aspects in the thesis.

Learning to dance

The introduction may have given some idea of the limitations as well as the scope of dance research in general and of research into CBD in particular. There are some methodological difficulties in studying the anthropology of dance. If, as discussed in the introduction, we have to consider the meaning of dances within the context in which they are performed, we have also to bear in mind that they can also be transferred to other settings, and also that dance has no universal meaning. It may be asked, therefore, how a researcher can understand the meaning of dance. Probably most of the information that will be required will be contained in the statements of spectators and participants in a dance event. Noel Dyck, in his reflections on research into sport, said of spectators and participants that 'the perceptions and interpretation and accounts of how sport affects their lives was of particular importance' (2000:220). However, some dancers have difficulty talking about dance and explaining their dance experiences; the two ways of expressing

oneself, that is, dancing and talking, are often not easily reconcilable. In spite of this the focus of this study will be the everyday experience of the dancers and their spectators. Blacking has said that it is important to pay attention to the perception of dancers and spectators and to the ways that narratives are shaped and developed. According to him 'the language they use, the metaphors they choose, the analogies they draw upon, may reveal more than the content itself, and much more than a video tape or an analysis of their movements' (Blacking 1985:65). With reference to Blacking and how this thesis is to be shaped particular attention will be paid to these concepts. The words of the anthropologist Judith Oakley will also be heeded:

The way in which the anthropologist carries out fieldwork affects the sort of material produced, then analysed and presented in the final texts. The anthropologist rarely commences research with an hypothesis to test. There are few pre-set, neatly honed questions, although there are multiple in the fieldworker's head. There are theories, themes, ideas and ethnographic details to discover, examine or dismiss.(1994: 18-19).

As a non-dancer I felt that it was very important to immerse myself in the dance world. In order to do this I attended and audited some classes within the dance department as well as going to dance research seminars and conferences. This proved to be very useful, in spite of the focus on different genres of dance, as one was exposed to the language and issues around dance in general as seen by the students and lecturers. In my fieldwork the study was conducted in dance schools, with the Oxford University Dance Team with whom I spent a considerable time, and I also went to the Blackpool Dance Festival on two different occasions. In order to familiarize myself with the fundamental technicalities I also went to two beginners' dance classes where I started to learn some of the basic ballroom dance steps.

In many, if not most, societies, dancing fulfils a social role. Almost everyone is expected at some juncture to take part in dancing and our own Western European societies are no exception to this. Dances represent the assumption of recognized, often shared, patterns at recognized times. Even the growing child sometimes appears to adopt a dance-like stance or activity pattern, often in response to repetitive auditory or visual stimuli and this may to a greater or lesser extent lead on to the formal dancing patterns of mature persons. At some point in human maturation, however, instinctive dance-like patterns cease to be generally acceptable in society and dancing has to be learnt. Learning may take place in the home or through imitation in the dance- hall, but those who take it most seriously are likely to seek instruction in how to do it, and enrol in classes.

In the 1950s through to the 1960s in Britain it was the custom for many young people to go to dances as a form of socialization. Young women at that time were not encouraged to drink alcohol in public places and so often went to dances rather than public-houses to meet young men. These social dances for those under 18 years of age were usually held at the local tennis clubs or church halls. On the whole the dance areas in most of these buildings tended to be small and as a result of this most couples shuffled along to the music rather than danced. Ballroom dancing had not been a taught subject in most of the schools, most young people did not take classes as an out-of-school activity, and so there was no great demand for space in which to show off one's dancing. For those over 18 there were dances at universities, town halls, social clubs associated with workplaces and ballrooms, such as those run by the Mecca Ballrooms. These venues had more space but on the whole dancing did not reach a much improved standard. Normally women did not go to dance classes, but there was always the hope that the men had and if a man was able to dance well it was noted and commented on favourably by the women. Even when one was invited to balls in more prestigious venues, the emphasis for the women was not on how one would dance but much more on what one would be wearing and how one looked.

I first watched competitive ballroom dancing for entertainment, and only later began to consider it a potential subject deserving anthropological study. I decided that before I could embark on this I ought to acquire at least a basic knowledge of its fundamentals and decided that I needed to go to beginners' dance classes in order to find out what it was like to learn to dance and, if I could, what the motives were of some of the learners.

The dance classes: the first venue

The first class I attended in order to learn formally how to do social dancing was run by my local authority and was held in a school near where I live. The female teacher was assisted by one of her former male students who had been a competitive ballroom dancer. The teacher was a very experienced dancer, possibly in her late 60s. She had taken and passed the Imperial Society of Dance Teachers' examinations. Over the course of a year I got to know the teacher, her assistant and the other dancers, who became fewer and fewer as the year progressed, which I gather is often the way with local authority night classes.

Initially, the classes consisted of about thirty students. On the whole there were equal numbers of males and females at these dance classes, which is quite unusual, as normally there are more women than men wanting to learn to dance. Their motives for wanting to learn were varied. Besides the couples who were getting married, there was another couple who had spent their first holiday in an Italian village where they now had a second home. When living there, they discovered that many of the local people danced and wanted them to join them in their festivities. Quite a few of the rest danced for health reasons: they claimed that they wanted to keep fit and felt that this was preferable to going to a gymnasium or a health club. The ages of those attending the class ranged from the twenties to the sixties. Their occupations were quite diverse: a couple of lawyers, two or three teachers, office workers, a doctor, a nurse, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist. Most were British, but Americans, Italians, Portuguese and Greeks also attended these classes. The majority of the dancers wore smart casual clothing, possibly what they would wear for going out in the evening but not necessarily what they would if they were going to a dance. They did not have special shoes for dancing, although it was suggested by the teacher that they should.

The classes lasted for two hours and usually two dances were learned each evening. The way that the dancers were taught was as follows: the teacher and her male assistant would demonstrate the step, then the class would be ranged into lines, the women behind the teacher and the men behind the assistant, and follow their steps. Once this had been done several times, the students would then take partners and the process of learning to dance commenced. This was to music from a radio-cassette recorder, and the music would be especially chosen depending on the stage of the dancers. We all changed partners each time the music stopped. Some came to the class in couples and essentially wanted to dance with their own partners all the time, but this was not permitted as the teacher felt when learning it was important to dance with more than one partner in order to get a different dance experience. This experience could be gained by dancing with someone who had a different body shape from their accustomed partner or someone who moved in a different way. All the dancers were beginners but in time some began to progress more rapidly than others. Usually the ones who were most successful were those who were more motivated and had some goal in mind. For example, there were three engaged couples who wanted to be able to lead off the dancing at their wedding receptions. What was clear quite early was that everyone wanted to dance, but that most people were surprised at how difficult it was to learn. Often such comments were made to

the teacher as, 'It all looks so easy when you see more experienced people dancing' To this the teacher would respond 'That is one of the secrets of a good dancer, she and he should *make* it look easy to dance well.'

As mentioned, before the beginning of the class most students were at the same level but as time went on some became much better than others. That has been said to be due partly to regular attendances at the classes, although these students also went to weekend ballroom dance classes in such places as Torquay, and one couple even went in addition to other classes locally. It is noteworthy that the dancers who attended other classes were couples and the teacher knew and encouraged this. For the unaccompanied dancers there seemed little cohesion or enthusiasm in the class. On observing the single dancers I noted that they did not seem to pair up either during the dance or at informal discussions in between dance practices. Their motivations for coming to classes were less clear, mostly they had claimed it was for health reasons, however, I felt that it more likely that they were hoping to meet a desirable dancing or social partner as it seemed as though each time they came to the class they were looking for new students and when they did not appear they lost interest. There also seemed a reluctance on part of some of the women to dance with some of the single men as the most popular dance partners were the ones who came with partners, this was never voiced but shown by the women heading for these men at the beginning of each dance. It might be thought that these men were the better dancers but this was not necessarily so. Certainly after the party when the classes stopped, there was no discussion of the students meeting again, or commitment to further dance classes. It was difficult to assess how much the students had learned, since I spent more time participating than observing.

At this class it was not unusual for some dancers not to appear for weeks and then when they came back they did not know the newer dance steps that had been taught in their absence, and as a result, they had to be taught them. This tended to hold back the other members of the class, which meant that those who attended the class more frequently were inclined to become a little bored after a while. The teacher's aim was to try to find some students who could be entered for their bronze medals in dance, (these medals are discussed in Chapter Two), but no one came up to this standard and in the end, because the students became fewer and fewer, the class was discontinued. It was agreed by those who remained, numbering about twenty in all, that it was a harmonious group with a great respect for their teacher, but it emerged that ballroom dancing was quite low among the priorities of the students. As

indicated, not all of those enrolled were regular in their attendances, and sometimes those present were fewer than ten; this was considered the minimum number for the course, and the principal reason for the course closing.

When I told the teacher that part of the reason I was learning to dance was because I was researching CBD as an outsider to dance, she said, in a half-laughing manner, 'Good luck with it. It's a jungle out there. Like in so many other activities there can be a lot of nasty politics in dance. You may find that those at the top of the dance world will not be willing to help you.' This was similar to many statements that I would come across throughout my research.

The early classes essentially taught ballroom dancing at a very basic level and in spite of a very personable teacher and assistant the experience was not a very enjoyable one. The venue where the dance classes took place was far from ideal; it did not have a good floor, it had no canteen facilities and was not situated at a place easy for access by pupils who might have to use public transport, which no doubt limited the number who registered for the class. Also, without disclosing what it was about, the teacher admitted to not being on good terms with the local authority and was consequently not really committed to trying to continue the class.

It was around this time that I became acquainted with a couple, Jacqui and her husband Richard, who have become and remained among my main dance informants. I first met Jacqui through her husband, who is a keen amateur/professional dance photographer. Very early in my research I had discovered that at most dance venues photography was not allowed and that when I wanted to demonstrate points to other academics I would need to purchase photographs to show what I meant. This meant getting in touch with Richard, whose photographs had been recommended to me. I initially got to know this couple when I went to their home, and, while I was looking at Richard's samples of photographs and purchasing some of them, we discussed what I was doing. They showed great interest and were willing to discuss salient points regarding CBD and have helpfully continued to do so even though they have emigrated. Once they had become my main informants they were prepared to talk in quite an informal way about the politics, and the problems facing teachers and dancers. Such informants play a very important part in working with anthropologists and providing them with insights about their way of life (Schultz and Lavenda 1990:9). This is especially interesting when they can give an emic view of learning processes.

In some cases informants may even take on a research life of their own. Not only does the anthropologist learn from them, but the informants too gain a different sort of knowledge of their circumstances. Jacqui and Richard have also started looking at their dancing in a different way, probably because their minds were open and they were interested in what I was doing. They are now living in Vancouver and working on the periphery of the film industry. Their dreams and hopes are that one of these days they will be able to make or be involved with a film about ballroom dancing. I am convinced that their experience as my informants will have broadened their own outlook on dancing and made them even more valuable sources of information for other enquirers. I do not lay claim to the idea that I was responsible for this: it is much more likely that I stimulated them into thinking how best they could use their skills with regard to CBD.

The second venue

I was not sure where to go for my second venue after the first class folded, but fortunately Jacqui and Richard were attending the Starlight Ballroom Studio, where they suggested that I should meet them. They later told me that they both felt very fortunate to have found Mrs Pat Goode as a teacher there. They feel that she is a real 'dancer's teacher', in that she is keen to help dancers in all aspects of dance culture, spends a lot of time with them and does not charge a great deal of money, as some of the other professional teachers do.

The Starlight Ballroom consists of a whole floor above a pub in Streatham. Pat Goode, the teacher, is a dynamic woman in her 60s. When I arrived, she took the group she was teaching with her and greeted me by dancing around me. Jacqui and Richard had told her about me and what I was attempting to do in my thesis and this was her way of welcoming me to her dance class. It was quite fun and helped me to feel much more relaxed at this dance school than I had at the first one. It was here that I began to understand the narrow profit margins under which small schools had to operate. Pat could only hire the ballroom on two nights per week. Each dancer at the beginning of the evening paid £5.00 cash per class. I later learned that the hire of the premises cost Pat around £50.00 per evening and that if any teacher gave private lessons Pat would collect £10 per hour to give to the owners of the ballroom.

Pat had an arrangement with the teachers who assisted her, that in return for their help she would give them private lessons. It appears that this is the standard practice for ballroom dance teachers. The importance of such economic considerations was

brought home to me with additional force later, when I spoke to the many dance teachers from this country and abroad who had assembled at Blackpool for the Festival.

The Starlight Ballroom is purpose-built, fairly large and with a specially sprung floor and is owned by Bill and Bobbie Irvine, highly respected ballroom dance professionals. They do teach here, but they also hire the ballroom out to other teachers and dancers for practice. It has cloakrooms where dancers can change, and also a bar, which serves light refreshments and alcoholic drinks. On one of the long sides of the rectangular room are tables with chairs positioned around them rather in the style of ballrooms in the past. In between the dances people sit at the tables having their drinks or are clustered around the bar.

Pat Goode's dance classes start at 8pm and go on until after midnight. Prior to the large dance classes there are individual lessons for the more experienced dancers. I discovered this and often went early to see them going through their paces. They did not seem worried that I was watching them. Later when I got to know some of the dancers, most of them told me that it was quite good experience for them, having people watching them who they felt were being supportive rather than being critical at this stage in their dancing. It was at the Starlight Ballroom that I started to see coming together those being taught social dancing and others for competitive dancing, even if it was only using the premises. When I arrived early I was also able to observe another younger teacher there who was teaching teenagers to dance, all in the Ballroom and Latin styles, and it became clear that they were of quite a high standard and may have been practising for competitions. It was obvious that they had no contact with our class and at the end of their instruction, they were taken away quickly by their teacher, without even using the changing rooms or speaking to anyone. They were put through quite a rigorous routine, which required considerable energy. None of those I questioned among my fellow- students could, or was inclined to, tell me more about these emphatically distinct classes. I doubt whether anyone in Mrs Goode's class, or Mrs Goode herself, would have had the stamina to participate in these dances.

Pat, her husband, and three others taught the varying groups. Rather than call people like myself beginners, we were called the Bronze medallists, then there was the Silver medal group, the Gold medallists and those further on who perhaps danced in competitions, although this was not a stated aim of the teacher or

students. These categories here represented aspiration rather than attainment, though those in the higher category had probably passed through the requisite grades. As in the dance school I had attended previously two dances were taught per evening. The main difference was that there were more students, on an average about 50 per night, and the students seemed more dedicated to attending classes. As with my previous teacher, Mrs Goode was a teacher affiliated to The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. Her method of teaching was similar to that of my previous teacher. She demonstrated the steps with a partner, usually a more experienced student and then we practised the new steps in straight lines behind her. After this we each took a partner to dance the step and danced to the music from a cassette recorder. As a rule Mrs Goode took the more experienced dancers to teach, while her husband and staff took the less experienced.

I soon realised that out of the group of students I would not be one of her better dance students, probably because I was one of the oldest there. Nevertheless, Mrs Goode always encouraged me, and advised me to watch certain students who she thought were her best. Jacqui was one of the people whom she considered to be very competent dancers and as a result of this Jacqui occasionally went with Mrs Goode to demonstrate at other studios. She was also used as her student for demonstrations at certain functions. Jacqui's husband Richard had completed his bronze examinations and was now a silver medallist in the dance group, whereas Jacqui had reached a gold star position, that is, a stage of recognized excellence.

Of my fellow students most had come with their own partners but unlike in the previous class they did not seem to mind that they did not dance very much with their social partners. They appeared to me to be keener to learn the dance steps, and took their lessons rather more seriously. It also looked to me as if they wanted to attain medals, and perhaps enter competitions, rather than just to brush up their social dancing. At a later date I saw a couple of them dancing at competitions but not with the partners that I had seen them with at the Starlight Ballroom. With reference to this point, Harry Smith-Hampshire wrote in an article in *Dance News* (2003) that 'Nearly every competitive dancer in the "Ballroom Years" took dancing up socially first and then, perhaps by seeing the small competitions that were often the interlude to general dancing sessions, started on the competition pyramids themselves' (2003: 6) This was my impression of what was happening at the Starlight Ballroom, and certainly it was what Mrs Goode seemed to be encouraging.

During the evening there would be breaks in between the dances when the teachers and students usually had some sort of refreshment and rest. It was a time for general conversation, much of it inevitably about dancing, and one of the more experienced dancers said that dancing gave her 'such a buzz. I would love to tell young people that they don't need to take drugs to get a high, you can get the same when you dance well specially in comps.' Another woman recalled, 'when you dance with a good dancer and you dance well there is nothing like it in the world'. At this rest time, there was also a little gossip about members of the dance world, whom they either knew, or knew about. This was mostly about such things as who was dancing with whom, what competitions they were in and how they had done. Another aspect discussed was, who was going out with whom in the wider dance world, that is the world of dance competitions. Romance, and/or the lack of it, seemed to be one of the important factors for the women dancers.

All the dancers who came to this school wore special shoes for dancing. As for the rest of their attire the women wore the sort of clothes that they might go out in, not glitzy as in competitions, but rather clothes that would show off their dances to advantage. For example, many women wore skirts and jersey type tops. The tops were often clinging to the body and no doubt were felt to be flattering, while their skirts flared in such a way that the dance steps could be well and plainly seen. This combination of clothes was the most common at the Starlight Ballroom, although quite a few female dancers wore tailored trousers instead of skirts. The men tended to wear smart casual clothes, usually not jeans, normally well-pressed flannel trousers and short-sleeved shirts.

The average age of the dancers, as far as I could ascertain, was probably the early thirties, too old to just be taking up dancing for the first time for competitions, although when they had been younger many of the women had done other forms of dancing such as ballet in childhood. On the whole the men had not been in the habit of taking part in any other form of dancing before these classes, although many, like some of the women, had done disco-type dancing and had been struggling at a form of ballroom dancing before they decided to attend classes. It was not clear to what extent disco dancing had encouraged a later transition to ballroom. One of the men, a French national working in the city, told me that prior to coming to London he had been working in New York in the 'financial world', which he found quite stressful. He wanted a complete change, a pursuit remote from his daily tasks, and decided to go to dance classes, which he enjoyed so much that he was determined to keep going

to them when he came to London. Not only did he enjoy it, he thought it was a very healthy thing to do, and a good way of meeting attractive and desirable women.

Of the people whom I questioned, most were what I would describe as white-collar workers, some working in secretarial positions or as administrators, others as computer personnel. There were French people, Americans, Spaniards, Italians and Filipinos among the students whom I came to know. In this group the teachers were all English and mostly in late middle age. There were usually four teachers present, two male and two female, sometimes more but seldom fewer.

The two places where I went to learn to dance appear to be fairly representative of the ballroom dancing classes all over London. However, where and how many dance classes there are in London and generally in the UK has been quite difficult to ascertain. When I first asked this of the Dance Council at the beginning of my research I was informed that they had been trying to find out since 1992. On telephoning them in 2005, I spoke to another member of staff who said that they still do not know.

In the recent series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, a popular programme on television devoted to CBD in which dance professionals teach celebrities to dance. After being taught away from the studio, they dance on television, are then judged by professional dance judges and the television public, who telephone the studio to decide who should win. One of the compères of the show, Bruce Forsyth, said that there were over a million schools of dance in the UK, but the spokesperson at the Dance Council did not know where he obtained this information and wondered how reliable it was.

The dancing classes listed in the Yellow Pages tend not to teach only ballroom, however, but to include also such subjects as ballet and hip-hop. It is not my intention to explore the whole field but to keep within the bounds of a single well-attested tradition. For my purposes I preferred the relatively modest establishments specialising in ballroom dancing and not likely to confuse this tradition by offering too much variety - such as the Starlight (which is not listed under ballrooms). I made repeated requests to The Imperial Society of Dance Teachers for information about the number of dance schools teaching ballroom dancing and was told that they would find this out from their records and let me know, but the information never arrived.

It should be emphasised, though, that my approach to the classes I attended was essentially as a researcher, since learning to dance was not my real goal. Nevertheless going to them was instrumental in helping me to understand what is expected of dancers and how difficult it is to achieve these expectations. It was also a good introduction to a feeling for the social aspects of ballroom dancing and what seemed to be important to the participants in bringing about their enjoyment of dance. In addition it enabled me to gain some familiarity with the essential preliminaries for participation in ballroom dancing at a competitive level.

In the second venue, similarly to the first, the teacher was very much liked and respected, and she too was in her 60s. Mrs Goode from the start made it clear that she expected that all her students would enter for dance medals and as a result each group was named Bronze, Silver and Gold. The Starlight Ballroom is a well-known venue within the dance world and so she was able to attract a certain number of students, although part of her contract for renting the rooms was that she could not advertise her classes, probably because the proprietors also ran teaching classes there.

Comparing the two classes it felt as though the students at the second were much more committed to learning to dance, and on the whole were succeeding in this aspiration. Most of the students remained in the classes, went to dance at least twice a week and were extremely loyal to Pat Goode and her staff. An example of this was one of the women who was entering for her gold medal and had been coming to the classes for three years, she came to tell Pat Goode that she had met a man who she thought she would marry but he did not dance and did not want to dance and she would not be coming back in the near future. A farewell party was held for her by the other dancers, during which conversations were such as 'perhaps in time you can persuade him to dance'; it was clear that she hoped that this would happen as she was near to tears when talking to the dancers about no longer dancing. She did keep in touch with some of the dancers by e-mail and did marry and then left London.

For many, the Bronze group was similar to that of the first dance class inasmuch as people did not stay. As beginners they seemed not to realize how difficult it was to be a good dancer and perhaps lost interest. The teachers taught each group on a rota basis, but on the whole Pat Good taught the more experienced students. Some of the Bronze medal dancers did proceed to the Silver medal classes while I was there, although they had not entered for the medals. One couple especially, who were

dancing well, had not been dancing together when I first started and were now dancing as a couple as well as being a social couple. It was disclosed later that in addition to attending classes they were also having private tuition from Pat as she felt that they had potential to do well in dancing. In discussing this topic with Pat she told me that she knew quite early on when people came to learn to dance who would do well as long as they were willing to put a lot of time and energy into the activity. It has to be said that in neither class was there any thought about the students learning to dance in order to enter competitions; the *raison d'être* was to achieve medals. Furthermore, as far as they were concerned this was a recreational event in which they improved themselves by dancing well.

The Performance Class

After about two years of my research it became clear to me that to be a good competitive dancer it is probably also necessary to be a good performer. This would be especially the case in a competitive situation where it would be necessary to impress not only ordinary onlookers but also judges. Research in journals and books did not satisfy me in this context, since there was an assumption that one knew all about performance, how one prepared to perform, how it felt to be a performer and make contact with an audience. The question of performance is discussed in details in a later chapter, here one can simply state that for purpose of this thesis it is that element of the dance, which goes beyond, and is more personal than, competence.

In view of wishing to learn more about performance I attended a class on Performing at the Drama and Theatre Studies at Roehampton University. This is a practice class rather than a theoretical one. The rationale of the course as stated by the teacher was to provide students with sustained, systematic and coherent practical understanding and development of performance skills. Among the stated aims of this class was to develop the students' awareness of the body and voice as primarily expressive, creative, responsive and communicative, as well as to promote a sense of investigative inquiry about performance processes and techniques by means of reading and practical research.

These classes were held in one of the studios, so that we could move round as freely as possible. The class would start off with such exhortations as 'Imagine that you are a cloud in varying weathers.' Students would then run around the class miming actions without any inhibitions. There would also be breathing lessons and relaxing exercises connected with the different theatre styles. The teacher is an expert on

Asian theatre forms and many of the techniques practised were based on these. Those parts of the class focused upon the use of the body in performance felt very relevant to CBD.

From these classes, which I audited for one term, I, who have never been a performer, came to understand, as a performer, what it felt like to take on a different identity, that of a person, or an animate or inanimate thing, such as an animal or a cloud, completely remote from what one normally is. This may sound all too obvious, but it certainly does evoke a very different sensation and as one truly takes on the new role one's walk, one's body language, one's speech and one's whole demeanour may have to change. An example of this given to us in class was that, if for example you were portraying the queen in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, you would carry yourself in a manner that could be seen as queenly, and would normally walk and talk more slowly, and in addition would move in a smoother and more assured manner than you would as a person of a lower status. Also you would be expected to hold eye contact for longer, and speak in a low or quiet voice.

Another aspect of performing that I probably always knew, but which became clearer to me during these classes, was the use of imagination. When watching some of the younger students it was sometimes rather obvious that, when the teacher asked them to carry out a specific activity, they would often spontaneously make some slight change in their appearances. Neither the teacher nor any of the other students dictated what should be done, but just stipulated who or what should be portrayed.

Rather like the dancers these students did not seem to mind my being there and watching them. They did not quite understand why an anthropologist wanted to know about performing; there was an assumption that everyone would know what it felt like to act. In this class there was quite an element of fun, or perhaps more specifically of playful mockery, but also loyalty to other students in the class. It felt as though this would be what might happen at a drama school, as many of these students had been to some sort of acting classes before coming to Roehampton. It seemed to me to give me some insight into what is known as 'team spirit', of the kind that I was to observe in the Oxford University dance teams.

In the class it was clear that I was not accustomed to being on show, that is, to perform in public in the way that was expected here. Of course it is true that in everyday practice one takes on many roles, whether ascribed or otherwise, but on

the whole these often follow social and cultural conventions of the time. This short but enlightening time with the students of drama enabled me to appreciate what it feels like to become a performer. It also helped me to see what at times was missing in how some of the young dancers in CBD presented themselves and also at the same time, what was being developed by the more successful dancers, that is, a good performance. Attracting an audience, whether of judges or of simple onlookers, entails the assumption of a role which is distinct from, but can add a dimension to, one's everyday life. The examples which I have discussed have helped me to a certain extent to understand what the dancers experience and their interpretation of it from a narrative standpoint. For example, how they viewed a dance such as a waltz might depend on their awareness of its past, perhaps even associating it with the courtly or romantic dances to be seen in films and on television. There might even be some basis here for the fact that the Latin American rumba is seen as the most romantic dance of this group. It is nearly always danced in rather a sensuous manner, an interpretation deriving from how Europeans often perceive dancers from Latin America, which may in fact be far from reality.

These experiences contributed not only to the framing of my methodology but substantially to two aspects of CBD which are discussed in the two ensuing chapters - namely the parts played in it by embodiment and by competitiveness. It also has a bearing on what I have come to see as a most important aspect of ballroom dancing and one which spills over also on to its competitive side, namely the subjective sense of transformation during its performance which many if not most dancers and, I believe, some of the onlookers also, undergo. This phenomenon will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter.

Following from my own, limited, experience of performance I will, in the following chapter, offer an account of ritual and performance. Many of the perspectives presented in this chapter form an interpretative backdrop to, or perhaps a framing device for, the ethnographic specificities of CBD that follow it.

CHAPTER TWO

Ritual and Performance

Although competitive ballroom dancing does not consist of 'ritual dances' in the sense that anthropologists might consider dances at funerals, marriage ceremonies, as part of religious events on ceremonial occasions, as ritual dances, some of the ways in which anthropologists have explained how ritual works are useful for understanding the constructions of CBD events. In particular here I will make use of the term 'ritual' insofar as ritual is performed and that there exists a particular quality or qualities to that performativity.

There are in humans and a variety of animals some activities of an ostensibly ceremonious kind, which are recurrently encountered and are referred to as rituals. In humans they may be recognized as possessing purpose and function not only at the civic and religious reaches but also ethologically. In people they appear to be associated with the expression of signals, especially social signals, which are acknowledged by their participants and those who observe them, and which operate to preserve stability and order in particular situations and pursuits. It is not surprising that they can be identified in a great many human occupations, from the games of children to religious rites and including pastimes such as competitive and non-competitive sports (Huizinga 1950). It is my aim here first to examine them in general anthropologically recognised contexts, and then to explore their particular relevance to competitive ballroom dancing.

Ritual is notoriously difficult to define: perhaps the simplest definition, and the broadest, may be adapted from the account given in the sixth edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, in which it emerges as 'the set practices associated with implicit and explicit beliefs, ideas, attitudes and sentiments' (1967:175). Here can be found three necessary concepts: that there exist practices which are associated with beliefs and so forth and which are set. Variations on this will be developed below. Whether participants in ritual themselves think of it as ritual is a moot point, dependent on individual concepts of the meaning of the word. We need to consider more broadly not only the various meanings which the term can have in a particular context, but also to state what we mean by ritual in that context. There are some rituals that are closed, invariable and unchangeable; others apparently allow for considerable variation within a broad outline. Therefore some procedures described elsewhere as rituals comprise a variable as well as an invariable section, and here it

might appropriate to state that in the terms of this work the variable elements are referred to as Performance, while the Ritual remains as that which does not change without serious infringement of the whole. To make so sharp and sure a distinction at the very beginning of the discussion of what is perhaps the pattern underlying the basis of this thesis may appear somewhat arbitrary, but I believe it can be justified in what follows.

This necessarily amounts to an extended assessment of how this usage either agrees with or deviates from what other people have written on the subject. The term 'ritual' is in fact often to be found in anthropological literature, though even there a precise consensus about what it actually should be taken to mean is conspicuously lacking. As Gilbert Lewis said (1980), it is not uncommon to find the word 'ritual' used as a convenience, in the sense of the magical or the religious or both and neatly evading a decision needing to be made about whether an action is either magical or religious. So abundant and so various, in fact, are views on ritual that it is impossible to include all within the present discussion. Some appear to have emerged from predefined idea-sets, for example Ronald Grimes (1982). Some of them, nevertheless, are of general applicability and relevant to the subject of this work, and so need to be noticed here.

Gilbert Lewis makes it clear that no human individual and none of that individual's activities can be divorced from social action. Everyone has to take other people into account relative to his/her actions; but people cannot always formulate accurately their motives and purposes. 'The criterion of rationality does not enable us to distinguish ritual action from other forms of action' (1980: 219). 'The fixity or formality of procedural ruling may lead to actions coming to have an explicit meaning that without the ruling they would not have' (1980: 220). He has suggested ways in which one might recognise ritual. As he states, an anthropologist when witnessing a sequence of ostensibly symbolic actions does not say to himself or herself, 'Ah that stands for this, and this for that etc. therefore these are symbols, therefore I have seen a ritual performance.' (1980: 8) What is more likely to happen is that the he or she questions and wonders why, 'This is odd. This is ritual. Why do they do it like that? There is more to this than meets the eye. I must try to find out what ' (1980: 8). As he points out, description and interpretation of human behaviour are often bound together in the anthropological literature, but wholly objective descriptions, and a fortiori "pure" descriptions of social actions, are very hard to provide (1980: 216).

This has been particularly prominent in the multiplicity of definitions of ritual. For instance, according to Jean La Fontaine (1972) ritual refers to all symbolic behaviour and is not to be confined to actions associated with religious institutions. She claims, however, that the difference between ritual and other formalized behaviour lies at the level of symbolic elaboration. On the other hand Bronislaw Malinowski (1926) claims that ritual is essentially based on myth and the myth on which it is based provides a key to its meaning.

There is still a need, however, to distinguish ritual from simple everyday ceremonials, such as those of introducing persons to each other, though the distinction should be made in terms of function. Jack Goody has defined ritual as 'a category of standardized behaviour (custom) in which the relationship between the means and the end is not "intrinsic", that is it is either irrational or non-rational' (1961:143). Max Gluckman expressly excludes from ritual 'any complex organization of human activity which is specifically technical or recreational and which involves the use of modes of behaviour which are expressive of social relationships' (1961:22). A similar consideration operates for what are inaccurately known as 'healing rituals', which are intended to produce alterations, usually improvements, in the health status (cf Lewis 1980). A convenient distinction might be between what is ritual and an intermittent temporal performance aimed at producing a change at a particular instant of time: the child at one moment not an adult, at the next is: the patient passes from sickness to health, most dramatically in the course of a crisis or a miracle, but sometimes gradually through a series of spells or seances. Ritual, by contrast, can be seen as the repeated solemn declaration of the unchanging, the reinforcement of the fabric not so much of society as of things as they are.

Hughes-Freeland, in her introduction to *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media and Identity*, enters the caveat that the contributors to the book have no interest in defining ritual in essential terms, and employ the word 'heuristically and contingently, as an odd-job word or semi-descriptive term' subordinate to 'the larger category of "situated social practice"' (1998:1). She nevertheless asserts in the introduction to a book published in the same year that, 'Ritual is both a concept and an analytical tool', and points out, that it 'has been given a wide range of forms and applications by anthropologists.' She claims that 'there are three broad approaches to the analysis of ritual: first, as an event with a social function connecting the personal and the social, structurally or anti-structurally (Victor Turner 1969), secondly, as an aspect of all action, in a processional sense (Clifford Geertz 1973) and thirdly, as a particular

aspect of some action' (Catherine Bell 1992). These three approaches, (1998:3) among others, will be examined below especially with regard to their relevance to CBD.

Turner's work on ritual has had a great influence on many authors, and in his attempt to explain human behaviour, he has been much less restrictive than most of the functionalists who had looked at ritual before him. He often equated ritual with the potential to release humans from their commonplace life into a creative and liberating 'anti-structure' or 'communitas'. Edmund Leach, similarly, states that 'we engage in rituals in order to transmit collective messages to ourselves' (1976:45). Turner's work, however, has been criticised by many people, for example Maurice Bloch, who claims that it is the function of ritual to produce conformity (1974), while Michael Sallnow suggests that 'communitas' is pervaded by political differences and competing interests.(1981). Stanley Tambiah (1985) sees ritual as having the potential to engage with the political as well as imaginative dimensions of social experience. Grau argues along similar lines that based on a number of closely related assumptions:

Rituals are seen to be symbolic performances at the core of the social identity of communities, they create and maintain (or transform) a society's cultural identity and social relations, this assumes the existence of a ritual community or congregation, whose members share a relationship to the performance, its symbols and their meanings (1995:89).

She also contends that ritual can be mutable by dependence on changing performative requirements.

Performance may be described as essential for the functioning of ritual. On the analogy of embodiment performance and ritual may together be likened to the human body, with ritual forming the hard central skeletal structure, subject to change only gradually and imperceptibly, over which the soft and ever-changing structures of performance are built to enable the whole to function harmoniously. The theatrical analogy would be that of ritual as the script (and/or score) and performance as its manifestation in action (and the variety of ways in which this may occur). The uses of performance analogies and dramaturgical metaphors to give expressions to the structures and processes of human behaviour in the social sciences are numerous. The analogies have been criticised by Bell (1992) for exaggerating problems, which arise between 'the thinking theorist and acting object in ritual analysis for allowing the

symbolic to dominate the functional, and for resolving deterministically to a prior text, or a given structure of meaning' (1992:53) Although Bell's definition of ritual focuses on social action and describes it as 'a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian activities' (1992:74), it can apply equally well to performance (unless, of course, that is understood only as the replication of a given script or text).

Schieffelin (1998:194) says that the notion of performance has been used in two ways in the social sciences. The first, he refers to as 'particular symbols' or 'aesthetic activities' such as ritual or theatrical and folk artistic activities, which are enacted as intentional expressive productions in established local genres. 'Performance' in this usage refers to bounded, intentionally produced enactments which are (usually) marked and set off from ordinary activities, and which call attention to themselves as particular productions with special purposes or qualities to the people who observe or perform them. In short, in the sense in which we have been using the terms, this aspect is a projection of ritual on to performance.

The second usage of performance he says is associated with Goffman (1959) and the symbolic-interactionist school. The focus here for Schieffelin is 'not on the type of event but rather on performativity itself: the expressive processes of strategic impression management and structured improvisation through which human beings normally articulate their purposes, situations and relationships in everyday social life' (1998:175). Both these usages of 'performances' in anthropology draw their inspiration from the western notion of theatrical performance. Schieffelin also believes that there is something fundamentally performative about human existence in the world. Goffman (1959) has suggested that human intentionality, culture and social reality are fundamentally articulated in the world through performative activity. That is, when human beings come into the presence of one another, they do so expressively, establishing consensus on who they are and what their situation is about through voice, gesture, facial expression, bodily posture and action.

Performance of either kind, as mentioned above, is often thought to be characterised by conscious intent. Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw (1994) when looking at ritual through the Jain rite of worship differentiated between 'ritualization' and 'performance' as distinct modalities of action on this basis. They see the patterns that ritual assumes as having an object-like existence given to them by the fact that 'they

are ontologically constituted beyond individual intentions.(1994:267). Ritualization in their formulation refers not to a type of event but rather:

... universally to the mode of action, but because the attitude you have to ritual is part of it, this will be culturally constituted in different ways, and therefore ritual is universal, but not always the same (1994:268).

They exclude performance from their discussion of ritualization in the Hughes-Freeland book, as they consider it to be an activity involving conscious purposiveness and self-direction, unlike ritual (1998:10).

Schieffelin feels uneasy about these formulations with regard to ritual for the reasons that he

... is uneasy with a differentiation of human activity that turns primarily on privileging the performer's internal state of mind or mode of consciousness (ego-involvement or personal intention) and downplays their interaction with others (1988:196).

I am inclined to agree since it is rather difficult to assess the state of the minds of the people concerned, that is, how much or how little of the conscious is involved in people's actions. Susanna Rostas (1998) also concludes that it is difficult to differentiate between 'performance' and 'ritualised' actions. It can be said that every act has an expressive quality; it reveals and accomplishes something about the actor and the situation and how it is read by others. We both act for ourselves and for the eyes of the beholders. The issue here, Schieffelin claims 'is not that our expressivity is not entirely under our control, but rather that it belongs to the situation' (1998:197).

Another crucial element of performance has been identified by James Peacock: who writes 'A performance is not necessarily more meaningful than other events in one's life, but it is more deliberately so: a performance is, among other things, a deliberate effort to represent, to say something about something' (1990: 208). In *Ritual, Performance, Media* (ed.Hughes-Freeland 1998a), many of the contributors contend that performance in part consists of ritual practice and ritualisation. Rostas, (1998) one of the contributors, also claims that ritual events cannot be explained without a model of 'performativity'. The relationship between ritualization and performativity is variable, and the model can account for variations and transformations of forms of practice. For example, when Rostas studied two groups of dancers in Mexico who were dancing similar dances she found that the dancers of one group, The Concheros, among the symbols embraced many which were ecclesiastical. Their

dance comprises a circle formed by men and women with one dancer in the middle for each dance. This dancer's main role is to encourage the dancers by performing their best dance. Before the single dancer starts they move into the shape of a cross. The dancer in the centre often enters into a state of transcendence.

Such behaviour would seem to illustrate the part played in ritual in inducing 'transformation', as will be discussed in the following chapter. Rostas sees what the dancer describes as not exactly a trance but prefers the term transcendence. Her informant stated that this was how the dance begins to talk to her:

It is the dance who teaches you and adopts you as her apprentice. It is the dance who chooses you, the dance becomes your mistress...and talks directly to you, and not to the group (1998a:90).

Not everyone was able to attain this state or status, but for Rostas some could and did. It would seem to be something that could be sought by adherence to ritual.

The Mexica dancers, on the other hand, promote 'Indianness' and are rejecting the Catholic church and attempting to create a pre-Hispanic form. Many Concheros groups do not approve of the Mexica dance, they dance the same dance but do not adopt the same ritual stance. The Mexica, who are mostly a younger group than the Concheros, have largely truncated many of the dance rituals, for example they do not say prayers before the dance. They want to contact the Aztec deities rather than the Christian god. The Mexica's desire is to assert the self. They dance in an egocentric manner and are competitive. Few of the women dancers are able to keep up with the pace of the dance. Rostas describes a dancer dressed in impossibly large plumes, dancing with such speed and intricacy of step that no one can follow the dance. She says that the Mexica do get extreme satisfaction from dancing, but this appears to have much less to do with strict ritual conformity and much more with the satisfaction of pushing the physical body to its limits. Despite its ritual content this dance, rather than bringing out the best in the dancers and imposing conformity on them seems to bring out the worst, resulting in a lot of fighting among the dance groups.

Rostas concluded that the rural Conchero groups performed with a predominance of ritualization and a minimum of performativity. To achieve conformity and unity is their goal, whereas in the Mexica city groups the dancers have long since subverted the rural and ritual ways. Their dance has much more performativity to it; costumes are

more varied, different steps are explored. The Mexica show little interest in ritualization, their dances are pure performativity. In her analysis, particularly of the Concheros' dance, Rostas argues that it can be difficult to differentiate ritual from performance as both ritualization and performativity occur.

Thus performance cannot be explained anthropologically without reference to the specific context, which frames the action or performance. Focus on performance allows us to understand situations interactively; not in terms of communication models, but in terms of participatory ones.

For Rostas ritualization and performativity are discrete processes; ritualization involves a modification of the normal intentionality; it affects a subtle yet pivotal transformation in the relation between intention and action of human action. Whereas performance, 'in everyday life, at the extreme, often has the sense of putting more into something than is absolutely necessary; of loading an act with meaning, even of overdoing it, of above all meaning to mean...Performativity is thus a measure of effort (or energy or affect) that is put into action.'(1998:90).

Among others describing performance, Richard Baumann (1978) sees it as a nexus of tradition, practice, and emergence: between the traditions of performance and what emerges from particular ones. For Anthony Giddens (1976) and the neo-Durkheim action theorists (Harold Garfinkel 1967 and Bourdieu et al 1977) performative practice produces action. Rapport interprets this as a 'socio-cultural force distinct from the meanings and intentions of participating individual actors – since the skills which they involve may be minimal – a force which effects, instead, a continuing structuration of society' (Rapport 1998:178).

Karen Hastrup (1998) suggests that the acting body of the individual is the locus of cultural agency; what is stored in individual bodies made manifest, and transferred in individual performances, is social practices - that is, conventions on the way to becoming rituals. Indeed, she claims that agency is inconceivable outside the continuing conversation of a socio-cultural community: 'to be a competent human agent is to exist in a space defined by a [community's] distinction of worth...so that a collective habitus serves as the basis for [an] intentionless convention of regulated improvisation' (Hastrup 1995:106) which gives on to the social-structural coherence of the world. Rapport (1998:178) concludes from the above statements that 'what emerges from performance is social structure.'

Ingrid Rudie draws attention to the ritual surrounding embodied experiences and free-floating symbols in sport. She takes two sports as examples, cross-country skiing and figure skating. The latter has features particularly comparable to CBD: she describes it as 'a discipline in which conventional gender images are dramatised as an explicit aspect of the performance' (1998:125). In ice dance, it also brings sex/gender complementarity directly into the arena as it is performed by a male/female couple. In her case material the contests took on a dimension of ritual commitment for the spectators, though the degree of this varied among them. This implies that one and the same event may take on different characteristics for different onlookers. If by ritualization we imply involvement according to what is expected and believed, that which is performance for some can, depending on how seriously they take it, become ritual for others (1998:128).

In performance, for the participants and their observers, a great deal of contingency resides in whether the performance itself is properly carried out, whether it works and thereby satisfies the requirements of the underlying ritual. Everything from the observance of correct procedures to the resonance of symbolism, the heightening of emotion, the sense of transformation, all depends on whether the performers and participants carry it off. Performance can fail and be risky (Wulff :1998). In the West most forms of demonstration rely mainly on the relationship between the performers and the spectators, this is probably true in other cultures but it appears very different to Western eyes. An example of this could be given from behaviour observed by me in parts of Africa (Cameroon and Malawi) at concerts by popular and acclaimed artists, even those internationally famous. When the musician begins to play or sing the audience proceeds to get to their feet and dance. To European eyes they did not appear to be actually listening. Not only that, but they continue to talk and joke with each other during the performance. The musician did not seem unduly worried about this, but in Cameroon if any members of the audience put their cassette recorders on the edge of the stage he was angry and insisted that this be stopped. Under Western eyes the audience may appear to be behaving rudely towards the performer, but this did not seem to be the opinion of the African spectators, and it would not disturb the performer, in fact all would be likely agreed that it had been a good concert.

Another example of non-Western reactions to performers is well described in Schieffelin (1977) in the Gisalo ceremony, of the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea, mentioned elsewhere in this work. In Gisalo the dancers sing nostalgic songs about

the lands and rivers of the audience's community. Members of the audience are moved so deeply that they burst into tears and then become enraged, they leap up and burn the dancers on the shoulders with the resin torches used to light the performance. This remarkable response according to Schieffelin is probably necessary to the performance as if it does not happen the performance is abandoned. After a successful performance, the performers are held accountable for the painful emotions that they evoke and must pay compensation to those whom they made weep. It is real grief and anger that is evoked, and a Durkheimian 'conventional display of ritually appropriate sentiment' claims Schieffelin (1998:203). In this article he concludes by saying that the central issue of performativity, whether in ritual-associated performances, theatrical entertainment, or the social articulation of ordinary human beings, is 'the imaginative creation of a human world' (1998:205).

One of the most sophisticated presentations of performance theory has been put forward by Tambiah (1985). He reacts against the opposition of thought and action and suggests that the devaluation of action embedded in the distinction can be redressed by focus on performance. He distinguishes three ways in which ritual is performative: 1) it involves doing things, even if the doing is saying and ritual becomes a mode of social action; 2) it is staged and uses multiple media to afford participants an intense experience; 3) it involves indexical values, these are seen in its graded scale of ostentatiousness, the choice of site, the degree of redundancy or elaboration, and so on, all of which present and validate the hierarchy indirectly depicted by them (Tambiah 1985). To this it may be countered that, strictly speaking, ritual is not simply thought: it is the unifying structure on which performance, that is, the associated activity, rests.

We need to examine where the where the activity of CBD is situated in all these theories and ideas. To decide on this we need to assess, in the first place, the extent to which CBD fits into the society of which it is part, since virtually everyone who has written on ritual has taken it to be embedded in a society. In fact, it might be possible to claim that every writer on ritual and performance emerges from a society of his/her own which has predisposed him/her towards a set of social orientations or rules, a set which will have to a greater or lesser extent governed his/her approaches to whatever society he/she has chosen, or been impelled by fortuitous circumstances, to study. Such pre-programming could be instrumental in inducing a wider range than actually exists, of variation of opinion about what actually constitutes ritual and what part is played by performance. The attempts of anthropologists to learn about and

understand these from perspectives of the members of the cultures which they study, nevertheless can lead to some degree of consensus.

We need also to decide whether this societal conditioning is relevant to either the performative or the ritual constituents, or both of them, of CBD. To do this we have to look analytically at the society (or societies) in which CBD is found, and to assess the function, if any, of CBD within those societies. The origins of CBD as we know it, and as is shown elsewhere in this thesis, lie very firmly among certain of the societies of Western Europe. It might even be rewarding, though it would scarcely be fitting in the principal context of this thesis, to consider its relationship to other forms of ritual and performance in those societies and to establish its degree of affinity to them. Dance, in one form or another, is a social universal and in many places does play a ceremonial part which (as in the Mexican groups described by Rostas) may be ritual or performative or both. In CBD, however, both aspects combine in determining the decisions of the onlookers, both spectators and judges, in assessing its results in a competitive light.

Competitive dancing, in the sense of dance competitions, may be found in any number of societies. Rostas refers to the rivalry between the Mexican groups, but whether this is a form of competition or a conflict of ideologies is not clear, though Rostas appears to incline to the latter interpretation. We have in Great Britain folk examples of rival single-sex dancers such as English Morris-dancing teams and individual Scottish sword-dancers. It is, however, difficult to think of any form of competitive dancing other than CBD and ice-skating in which the basic competing units consist of male-female pairs which may or may not aggregate into teams; and this disposition of the units may be seen as reflecting conventions prevalent in the societies in which CBD has developed. Nevertheless these conventions have been assimilated for competitive, and in places also social, ends, into societies, which do not, as societies, share them.

In considering the significance of the part played by CBD in its societies of origin we are looking primarily at the extent to which it is a constituent part of those societies. It is easy to conclude that it cannot be, since it is inconceivable to think that without it those societies would be unable to function as they do. Conversely, could it in its present form have arisen without being part of them? That would be an equally absurd conclusion. This may be one reason for the distinction still maintained between the Ballroom (Western European) and the 'Latin American' elements. The

traditional ingredients of the former appear to be perpetuated virtually intact, while those of the latter are reinterpreted in a manner which deliberately accentuates their otherness and exemplifies the way in which an element self-consciously though rather remotely exotic may come to have a ritual status all of its own. This can be demonstrated in the deliberate restyling into conformity of the clothes in which these are performed, the obligatory use of make-up to bring the dancers closer to what the audience may see as 'Latin American' types, and even the assumption of facial expressions and gestures exaggerating sensuality, sometimes to the extent of appearing false where they are meant to seem familiar. An element of aggressively sexual movement creeps in, contrasting with the gliding and gentility of Ballroom and the quick light bird-like movements of younger dancers in, for instance, the quick-step. It seems almost as though the difference in movement is a ritualization of the contrast between 'us' and 'the other' underlying the performativity which gives individuality to the competing dancers, whether as couples or as teams.

It is obvious that many of the practices associated with it and described in other chapters that CBD contains (beside the foregoing and transcending it) an important component involving a number of set sequences, not all of them concerned simply with the patterns of dance but including conventions of behaviour and attire. These can be seen as being parts of ritual. In order to establish it as such it is necessary to return to the basic definition of what ritual is, and decide in the first place whether CBD constitutes an activity embracing ideas, beliefs, attitudes and/or sentiments, and whether its nature is fixed, at any particular is unchangeable. There can be no doubt about its being an activity: it is performed, and aspects of its performance are reflected not only in the actions present in it but also in the ways in which the performers are ranged into pairs and teams. The ideas and beliefs behind it are explored in several chapters, most explicitly in those dealing with the origins and history of ballroom dancing and how it is taught and learnt. The chapters in which the attitudes inherent in it are made apparent are from one angle that describing how the 'Look' is constructed and from another that containing ethnographic details gathered in association with cycle of university competitions and the culminating dance Festival in Blackpool. The fixity is to be found in the rules governing competition and to some extent in the expectations of the spectators. The lastmentioned in particular can be associated with the potential to release humans from their commonplace into a creative and liberating 'anti-structure', that is when the enactment of 'the structures of life are both elaborated and challenged' (1969), (Turner referred to this as 'structure and anti-structure') and then to return back to the 'communitas',

community in an altered state; such ideas Turner often equated with ritual. This is a concept with which the details given in the chapters referred to above do show as applying to CBD.

This may be related both to Turner's view of ritual as having the potential to release humans from the burden of everyday life and enable them to assume the self-expression of performativity and to the popular assumption that participants in CBD (and in other types of spectacle) are deliberately seeking the opportunity to perform in a way quite contrary to their usual behaviour but to some degree sanctified by having acceptable conventions of its own. Conversely, there are ways in which the social practices embodied in CBD appear to be neither strictly ritual nor strictly performance. Goffman calls such practices 'interaction ritual' and claims that:

The study of face- to- face interaction in natural settings doesn't yet have an adequate name... The subject matter, however, can be identified. It is the class of events which occurs during co-presence and by the virtue of co-presence. The ultimate behavioural materials are the glances, gestures, positioning and verbal statements that people continuously feed into the situations, whether intended or not (1967:1).

Those rules of etiquette and decorum which the participants in CBD adhere to and which appear to remove them from ever bringing to fruition the more exotic aspects intrinsic to some dance forms, essentially amounts to an adherence to certain patterns of Western social behaviour which are natural to Western competitors and exist independently of the rules governing the dance as itself. These rules, probably considered 'old-fashioned' by the majority of the onlookers, are hardly perceived by the dancers except when they are missing – a characteristic of good manners in any society. Decorum is a way of displaying roles, standards and interpersonal respect. It may, however, appear to non-Westerners accustomed to their own forms of decorum as being necessarily part of the ritual and consequently have the Turnerian advantage of enabling them to escape from the 'interaction rituals' of their own societies.

Roles and standards are inevitably bound up with the perception and the exercise of power, this is exemplified by an aspect of performance, which may, or may not be a feature characteristic of CBD. This involves the position of the judges. It is unthinkable that the opinions of the judges, and consequently their decisions, should be challenged; but it is equally impossible for them always to be popular. According to Patricia Penny, though the desire to dance well was always present, the wish to

win of the competitors she studied was not strong. (personal communication :2004). This could be part of an aim to conform, which might in its turn arise from the requirements of decorum but more probably from an aspect of CBD, resembling that present in some religious rituals, the conviction that certain actions need to be carried out before the whole performance to which they are intrinsic can be considered complete (cf. Schieffelin op.cit.). This would suggest that the power ostensibly wielded by the judges is one which can be swayed by considerations other than the quality of the dancing, based in a structure that is far from unchangeable, and hence a manifestation merely of performance. It is ritually necessary for there to be judges, but the variability in their judgments differentiates these from being truly a part of the ritual.

This is supported by an aspect of performativity which is not intrinsic to it and which is frequently seen, but which does not appear to have much influence on the judges, though it can be reassuring for some competitors. It might deviate from decorum, or even from ritual itself, for the views of the onlookers to essentially have any influence on CBD, and whatever their views the onlookers are in no position effectively to challenge the decisions of the judges; but it is within their power to manifest agreement or disagreement by the loudness and duration of their applause. Where a popular couple is thought not to have been judged fairly, they may nevertheless win obvious enthusiasm from the onlookers, while the couple chosen by the judges will receive only the token applause demanded by politeness. (This may be compared to and contrasted with the Gisalo reactions, analysed by Schieffelin (1977) and observations in Africa, described above).

It also links CBD, though not the non-Western practices just mentioned, closer to the question of whether or not it may be properly classified as a sport. The reactions of onlookers are an important component of many competitive sports, while sports, which are pursued simply as pastimes, though they may include an element of rivalry, can be practised with nobody present apart from the participants.

Another aspect of CBD, which may quite fortuitously appear to impinge on its ritual component (and incidentally differentiate it from other spectator sports), is the variable sacro-sanctity of the place where its performance occurs. The formal purpose of a dance – floor is to be the venue of dancing. When it is used as the site of competitive dancing, it theoretically becomes, for the period of competition, reserved for that and hence a “sacred” space. However, it is not uncommon for the

dance-floor being used for CBD to be used in the intervals of the competition by non-competing couples wishing only to dance. Curiously enough, no more exception is taken to this by either the competitors, or the competition officials, than was taken to the dancers at African concerts such as that I have described above. The sacred space, therefore, is consecrated to CBD, but only for the period during which the rituals and performances intrinsic to competition are occurring.

This could only have developed following the introduction of a competitive constituent into ballroom dancing. Before that the dance-floor would have been available for performance by anyone invited (to a private dance, or ball) or who had paid for entrance (to a dance-hall commercially run) or otherwise had free access to a suitable venue for dancing. Any restriction would consequently have happened relatively recently – and we know this from the relatively short history of CBD. It could in this way be taken as evidence in this one respect at least of some ability to be changed situated at the apparent heart of the pursuit. This could mean that in this context ritual may not be fixed.

Let us look finally and momentarily at the requirements for the fixity of any ritual. Lewis defines this as its being 'bound by rules which govern the order and sequence of performance' (1980:7), and goes on to describe its alerting role as an instrument of communication of information. For it to be unchanging it would be necessary for it either to be stipulated minutely in some permanent record or held in an unvarying set of memories transmitted from generation to generation. Whichever way it happened, once ritualization has occurred it would still be open to whatever degree local practice permitted of variation brought about quite similarly by performative fluctuations. Even records held to be as sacred as the plays of Shakespeare or the books of the Bible are subject to vagaries of translation, sometimes to deliberate deformation. Observing ritual at what could be seen as a fundamental level Gilbert Lewis remarked how tangibly it could be changed by 'ostensibly unrelated external influences, and how when these influences impinged upon it what had always seemed to be necessary might itself need to change' (1980:7).

CHAPTER THREE

Embodied Content and Competition in Dance

Dance requires bodies to perform it, but bodies are not simply biological entities: they are also social and cultural entities. In this chapter I will consider how bodies become embodied for dancing and how they are subject to both discipline and control to fulfil the requirements of competitive dancing.

The expression 'the body' as autonomic entity has become problematical. Not perhaps for most people, or for doctors or anatomists, but for those interested in the human body in cultural contexts. From being an instrument of human experience, of pleasure or of pain, of work or of leisure, an object of aesthetic regard or of spiritual scorn, attention is coming increasingly to be directed to the body's other natures and their implications. As an object of research it is now often replaced with the term 'embodiment', the significance of which can be seen to go beyond the intrinsically space-occupying connotation of the former expression. The embodied experience of a dance may not only shape how we interpret that form but also lead us to suppose that we have similar insights into forms of practice with which in fact we have no such familiarity or understanding. From one angle dance may be regarded simply as one of the ways in which the body is used. Marc Johnson remarks that:

What we can experience and how we make sense of what we experience depend on the kinds of bodies we have and the ways we interact with the various environments we inhabit. It is through our embodied interactions that we inhabit a world, and it is through our bodies that we are able to understand and act within the world with varying degrees of success (1999:81).

This may strike one as an over-simplification, and indeed a number not only of dancers but also of contemporary thinkers would have reservations about this (see below). The term 'embodiment', is used with different emphasis and often with some variation of intention by different writers, in anthropology, psychology and the arts.

Among these we may mention the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) and the anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1999), who have done considerable work on the aspects of embodiment. The former distinguishes in the first place between the objective body, which is the body regarded as a physical and physiological entity, and the phenomenal body, which is not just some body but my, or your, body as I, or

you, experience it. By using the term 'embodiment' Merleau-Ponty showed the way the body opens up a world:

The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true for motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world (1962:146).

For Merleau-Ponty, then, embodiment is not a concept that pertains to the body grasped as a physiological entity, but rather it pertains to the phenomenal body and to the role it plays in our object-directed experiences. As Csordas explains it:

If embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or inter-subjective ground of experience, then studies under the rubric of embodiment are not "about" the body per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood 'from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the world (1999:143).

Marcel Mauss characterized techniques of the body as the ways in which from society to society there is knowledge of how people do or ought to use their bodies (1935 trans. 1973). He identified the body as a social as well as a socio-psychological and biological phenomenon. He suggested education (or training) as being dominant among all elements of what he termed the art of using the body:

The notion of education could be superimposed on that of imitation...What takes place is a prestigious imitation. The child, the adult, imitates actions, which have succeeded, and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him. The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving the body. The individual borrows the series of movements which constitute it from the actions executed in front of him or with him by others (Mauss (1935) trans. into English 1973:73).

It was the notion of the prestige of the person who performed, the ordered, authorized, tested action *vis-à-vis* the imitating individual, that for Mauss encapsulated the social elements in techniques of the body. His work on the analysis of the techniques of the body influenced Michel Foucault's work on the body as a site of discipline and power (1977, 1978, 1985,1986) as well as Pierre Bourdieu's(1984) explorations of sports as markers of taste and distinction in class-based societies .Bourdieu after analysing among other things such issues as the financial aspects,

the age of the likely participants and the body generic which is objectified by the gaze and discourse of others he suggests that as a general law :

A sport is more likely to be adopted by a social class if it does not contradict that class's relation to the body at its deepest and most unconscious level, i.e., the body schema, which is the depository of a whole world view and a whole philosophy of the person and the body (1984:218).

Dyck and Archetti (2003: 8) suggest that the work of Mauss on the techniques of the body, although it does not deal strictly with sport and dance, readily accommodates comparative analysis of sports and dance, both with one another as well as 'non-leisure' activities. Importantly, it is to know how the talented and the not so talented learn how to use their bodies in any given performance situation. The line that separates formal training in sport and dance from the learning of body techniques through observation, imitation, and what Mauss termed 'the circumstances of life in common.' (Mauss 1973:85-86) is sometimes a very fine one. Athletes and dancers do indeed learn from watching and listening to one another; this aspect of CBD is shown in other chapters. Individual performers may adapt or reinterpret conventional moves or, more rarely in CBD, even devise novel steps. The assessing and proclaiming in CBD by students, team members or dance partners, of the limits of a coach, official or instructor, does arise in sport and dance from the novice to professional level. The point is that while teaching and learning techniques of the body involves the transmission of physical knowledge it may not be readily translated into verbal terms.

Although, as in many occupations, there is specialised language when being taught the rules of the trade, it was interesting for me, when I had spent more rehearsal time with the sports team in Oxford, to observe how many of the terms used by the team were those associated with a sports session rather than what might be used in other forms of dance lessons such as the 'the coach, next match', 'the squad' and 'fair play.' These and other embodied processes of sport and dance often occur within thoroughly social settings and are subject to being noticed and discussed.

The acquisition of refinement of techniques of the body that are central to sport and dance involve a recurring process that links doing, experiencing and then reflecting upon the action. In the course of attending formal or informal training sessions, lessons or rehearsals, athletes and dancers experience varying combinations of sensations. What they also experience is self-consciousness, that is, becoming more aware of their bodies.

In CBD some of the female dancers talked about feeling more elegant when dancing the Ballroom style of dance, which they hoped would also be seen in their everyday life. On the other hand often when they feel they have not done well in competition they would see it as being a fault in how they moved, which may or may not be associated with the dance steps. An example of this would be when they do not feel in harmony with their partners and have let them down (as is mentioned in the questionnaire) or when they feel irritated or tired and lose concentration on the steps.

These times for acquiring understandings of what to do with one's body and how to do it within the context of any given sport, or form of dance, feature not only physicality but also various reflections upon one's attempts to accomplish particular moves and actions in particular ways. In these settings physical action is subject to continuing assessment and correction that seeks to replicate recognised and valued patterns of movement.

Felicia Hughes-Freeland (1998:3) claims that in sport and dance techniques of the body connect and operate in concert with techniques of the self, a point made also by Foucault (1988). Who one is and what one does, what one cannot do or, at least, cannot yet do satisfactorily, may be readily conflated either in the reflexivity of a dancer, or in the comments of and treatment extended by coaches, instructors or performing partners. Another anthropologist, Nigel Rapport, argues 'as the self is embodied in performance, so is any performance an embodiment of selves (1998:179)

Dance practice processes of embodiment tend to unfold in the presence of larger aggregates of fellow dancers; and one of the most difficult adjustments that accompanies retirement, or even temporary withdrawal, from this activity, is this loss of intense sociality that goes along with being a member of a team, club or company. The social element of dance appears to go far beyond the social chat, which occurs before and after training. It seems also to involve the way in which one learns to dance, and how not to use one's body but also how to enjoy using it. In CBD, as will be discussed, many of the followers of the competitions are those who have been dancers and still wish to continue to be part of CBD scene.

The progressive achievement of 'body discoveries' that informs learning processes within dance is individually experienced but socially mediated. The confirmation,

identification and labelling of 'newly' experienced actions or movements require specific vocabularies of movement that may be verbal or gestural in nature. The movements in dance are ephemeral creations that are experienced and forgotten or that live through being reflected upon, witnessed, named, remembered and quite possibly repeated. An individual's embodied achievements cannot be readily verified without the assistance of knowing witnesses. Nor can embodied selves be easily generated or sustained in dance without the presence and assistance of co-participants. What one learns about one's performance relies to a greater extent upon how these may be read in the response offered, or withheld, by significant and knowing others.

What dance also entails, alongside socially and otherwise mediated self-consciousness, is expressive and imaginative creativity that must take account of the inherent sociality of those embodied activities. From an anthropological perspective Edward Schieffelin (1998) says that the significance of, and meanings attached to, physical performance of dancers are not textually prescribed but socially constructed within the corporeal fields of interaction. They depend upon collaborative forms of agreement about what a particular movement means and how it might be best produced, as well as collusion about what remains unsaid and undone.

Dancing is said to be particularly pleasurable when it involves performing recognised forms of movement in proficient, yet relaxed and even playful ways. At its very best, Wulff identifies the emic term for this in ballet, as:

... 'ballet revelations' that are remembered as a heightened state of mind that resembles a religious conversion. They can be a source of unprecedented empowerment.... The point is that they make a lasting impression that cannot be outshone by later experience of ballet art: ballet revelations are formative and may be the force that makes a ballet pupil decide to become a professional dancer... (1998 116-117).

Revelations such as these, by definition, are not frequently encountered. They are, however, mimicked by somewhat less intense, but nonetheless absorbing, occasions when dancers contrive to 'play' with forms of embodied practice. These experiences, located between the monotonous routines of everyday life and the exacting ideals and physical requirements of dance, can afford dancers pleasurable experiences and embodied selves that transform the time, effort and sacrifice invested in the activities into resources well spent.

The negative side of these activities are the injuries and pain that may accrue from participation in dance. Also the potential danger to one's self image: to attempt to dance at most levels is to open oneself to potential public humiliation. To be revealed to be a person with a demonstrably awkward or uncoordinated body is to suffer more or less keenly felt injuries to one's dignity and sense of self. But even highly experienced amateur or professional performers are constantly confronted by the unpredictability of certain dances and the realization that they are, perhaps, only one step away from embarrassment or ridicule.

In the company of fellow performers, a shared appreciation of such risks might serve to mitigate the sting of embarrassment, although this is by no means an ensured outcome. Competitiveness can prompt a distinct lack of compassion in both dance and sport. But when performing for audiences that comprise more than merely fellow participants and the occasional coach or instructor, one presents one's body, one's movements for critical appraisal. What is made of such performances by the spectators and fans lies beyond the control of the dancers.

The sharing of interpretations and verbal and non-verbal expressions of appreciation or distaste constitute not only communication, but also modes of social interaction. For fans, the exchange of opinions on any or all facets of the dance, including the merits of individual dancers, provides a medium for the negotiation and maintenance of social relations in CBD. This may be confined to a brief conversation struck up with a stranger during the interval or alternatively serve as a basis for a long-term friendship as can be seen at Blackpool.

Interpretation and appreciation of dance are accompanied by processes of identification that may operate at a variety of levels with reference to all manners of factors. For example the moving bodies of performers, which could be scientifically described and categorized in kinetic terms, are just as likely to be identified in terms stereotypical of gender, age, race, class, ethnicity, religion or nationality. The potential for the drawing of invidious distinctions between 'us' and 'them' always exists in these situations. But there are also ample opportunities for fans who are inclined to establish understandings of the mechanics and aesthetics of performance. Fans may also create narratives that record and celebrate memorable performances first and foremost in terms of the individuality and talent of those who created these moments. Through a common commitment to specific techniques of the body and forms of practice proffered by dance, men and women may be enabled to experience

a liminality that permits not only temporary escape from the realities but also opportunities to contemplate and experience new visions and possibilities.

To illustrate this point: Paula Salosaari (2001), as a ballet dancer and teacher, felt frustrated with the continuous repetition in ballet training and looked towards how this training could be changed. Her research showed that by encouraging the dancers to use their experience as well as their codified ballet steps, the dancers became agents of change, rather than objects to perform the dance. In CBD, which also has codified steps, the dancers, especially as the top end of the profession, are able to realise more openness in their performances and expand their vocabulary when they too incorporate their conscious and unconscious sensations. Although those dancers just starting or progressing up the ladder of CBD will be expected to learn mostly by rote, any examples of expected behaviour in Western society could be changed. An example of this was when the dancers danced together in the Ballroom style they were told not to look at each other but over their shoulders, as this looked better. With regard to the Latin style: when I studied the style of Carlinhos de Jesus, the famous dancer and dance teacher whom I interviewed in Rio de Janeiro, I noted that his movements when doing the samba were quite different from those in CBD. For him the dance was one of national identity and included a certain dignity and gracefulness, which was not so apparent in CBD (cf. Barbara Browning (1995)). He was extremely critical of the way he had seen it done in videos of the Blackpool festival and saw it as a European version of a Brazilian dance.

Dancing provides an outlet for the public display, even the accentuated exhibition, of the body on which it intermeshes not just with other individuals but with society in a manner which does not emphasize or exploit the body as itself alone but as a channel for much more than that. There is also a sense of community that is frequently triggered by performance and absorption in dance, which can suddenly connect individuals. The body in movement, the body as the setting for adornment, bodies interweaving without impediment, coalesce into a particular form of artistic performance, constantly changing, constantly pleasing to the eye, and at the same time constantly self-aware. Embodiment in the dance gives pleasure to both those who perform and those who watch and employs a language, which has no need for words.

Yet embodiment is also integral to the component of CBD which constitutes the way in which physical display serves to set off, in action and adornment, those points which enable judgement to be made among and between dancers: competition.

Competition

Definitions of competition can come from a variety of disciplines, since competition is present in societies in so many different forms and affects it in so many ways. These are reflected in the multiple definitions given by Simpson and Weiner in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989). Not all of these can be applied to CBD; in fact, only five of them appear apt in this context. These are:

- the action of endeavouring to gain what another endeavours to gain at the same time;
- striving of two or more for the same object, rivalry;
- a contest for the acquisition of something (in this case, eminence of rating);
- a match to determine relative excellence;
- a trial of ability in order to decide the superiority or comparative fitness of a number of candidates.

The first of these appears to derive from that given by the anthropologist Margaret Mead, who defines it only a little more broadly as 'the act of seeking or endeavouring to gain what another is endeavouring to gain at the same time' (1967:8). If one assumes that the objective aimed at is principally fame and acclaim, which may or may not be coupled with a potential for increased material gain, one is struck by the similarity to the objectives in sporting contexts. It is important to note that in each of the definitions there is a rival and an attempt to excel or overcome that rival: hence competition appears always to presuppose another or others.

Competition is sometimes popularly judged to be very anti-social, generating hostile passions instead of sympathy. Open and declared opposition, however, is not the thing most likely to give rise to hatred and jealousy. Where a conflict takes place under recognised rules and conditions, which are observed by both parties, it does not necessarily give rise to bitter feelings. Bitterness tends to arise when there is, or is believed to be, something unfair, some exception, some infractions of the rules, resulting in unjust discriminations (Keating, 1973).

It is in the manner and extent to which those definitions apply to CBD that the similarities to sporting activities are most apparent. Mead's definition of competition in which two or a group of people are endeavouring to gain what another pair or group is endeavouring to gain at the same time would be the nearest definition to fit this activity. CBD is when social dancers decide to compete against others using dances which have in the main been associated with social dancing. Social dancing in its Western European form is essentially dancing for pleasure and not for onlookers, and may take place at venues especially built for dancing. When people dance for pleasure as in social dancing they often make up steps to go with the music as they feel it, even though they know it is supposed to be a particular dance. For example, a dance could be announced as a quickstep and some will do a quickstep of their own choice. A proportion of such dancers will feel that they want to 'improve' their dancing style by learning a generally accepted form of the standard steps. It is this, as much as anything, which has led to the establishment of Professional Dancing Bodies as recognized authorities, entitled to regulate and stipulate the forms they are to take. In order to learn these steps people wishing to be at ease with social dancing are most likely to go to dance schools like those described. Many of these schools are kept going by encouraging dancers to enter for dancing medals which reward proficiency, and perhaps to go on to take part in dance competitions. There are no age barriers to aspiring for these medals, and such competitions can range from those for children to those for 'Senior Citizens'. The age-group most evident in public displays, however, is that of adults in their twenties and thirties, and it is upon those that I have principally concentrated in this research. I did, however, notice both older and younger dancers, especially when I attended and observed the lessons at the Starlight Ballroom.

It was during the time spent at the Starlight Ballroom that I began to appreciate the similarities between dancing and sporting activities. In fact many of the younger adherents of CBD prefer to call the activity Dancesport, rather than CBD. On discussing this with a dancer from Imperial College, he said that he too found that younger dancers seemed to prefer the idea of Dancesport, but he quickly added that as far as he was concerned 'dance was an art form and not a sport'. It is when one takes into consideration the element of competition the emphasis on winning that CBD begins to appear more a sport, this is also shown with the University teams, an obvious example of this is that the name of the Oxford team is the Oxford Sportsdance Team. Sport implies a combination of competition with athleticism and the athletic demands placed on dancers at the competitive level are astonishing. A

member of the Dance Council told me that he believed there was a German study which noted that each dancer performing a three-minute quick step exerts as much energy as a competitor in an 800 meter run. I have unfortunately been unable to find a reference to support this.

Another aspect is that, as with some sporting activities, there are medal tests for amateurs. The tests are set by the various dance societies to assess the progress of the dancers in dancing. Examinations are conducted by experts in the field. The medals comprise Bronze, Silver, Gold and for some Gold Star, which ranks rather higher than Gold. Strictly speaking, according to the rules laid down by the Professional Dance Bodies, medals are acquired through examinations. The first grade of attainment is the Bronze medal. This essentially expects patterns and techniques associated with basic social ballroom dancing. The next highest is the Silver medal, in which the patterns and techniques are those associated with more advanced ballroom dancing and then the Gold medal, where the dancing is expected to be technically sound. It is often at this stage that the dancers think of entering competitions: Gold Star 1, 2, 3 depending on the Dance Body. For the Bronze and Silver medals the main points required are neat and correct footwork, a good upright poise and a correct hold, 'a *quiet* interpretation of the basic and standard figures' (Alex Moore 1986: 289), that is, a soft and flowing movement. Naturally a superior degree of attainment in all of these is demanded in the progression from Bronze to Silver. In the Gold medal examinations consideration is given to the dancer moving correctly, and with style and other technical details.

This perhaps sounds easier than it is, but for example what is required by The International Dance Teachers Association for the fox-trot is quite bewildering in the names and number of steps. Alex Moore claims that 'The foxtrot is considered the most difficult of all ballroom dances' (1986: 166). For the Bronze level competitor there are 8 steps which comprise: Basic Weave, Change of Direction, Closed Impetus, Feather Step, Natural Turn, Reverse Turn and Feather finish, Reverse Wave and the Three Step. These steps are the basic ones which are considered the building blocks of the foxtrot. For the Silver level there are 14 required steps which are: Closed Telemark, Hover Feather, Hover Telemark, Natural Twist Turn, Natural Weaver, Open Impetus, Open Telemark with Feather Ending, Open Telemark, Natural Turn with Outside Swivel, Feather Ending, Quick Natural Weave, Quick Open Reverse, Reverse Pivot, Top Spin and Weave from Promenade Position. Such steps as the Telemarks required for the Silver level are essentially variations on the Natural

Turn, whereas the Natural Hover Telemark, one of the steps required for the Gold level, is described by Moore as 'the most attractive and difficult figure...for advanced dancers only' (1986:199). Gold level has 9 required steps which are: Back Feather, Bounce Fallaway with Weave Ending, Curved Feather, Curver Three-step, Extended Reverse Wave, Fallaway Reverse, Slip Pivot, Hover Cross, Natural Hover Telemark, Natural Zig Zag from Promenade Position.

Competitive ballroom dancing has come to be regulated by the British Dance Council, which legislates and upholds the rules of the competitions. There are three classes of competitors, the under 12 who are known as Juveniles, and the over 35 who are called Senior; all the remaining dancers are classified as Adult dancers. There are also three styles of dancing, the first of which is Ballroom (which has been known as Modern and Standard Dance), which, as has been mentioned earlier, comprises the waltz, the foxtrot, the quickstep, the tango and the Viennese waltz, dances which were developed for competition in the first decades of the twentieth century. The second is the Latin style, comprising rumba, samba, cha-cha, paso doble and jive; these styles were coming to the fore in competitions by the middle of the twentieth century. The third style is the sequence style, which originated in the late nineteenth through to the early twentieth century. This style was not addressed by the Oxford dancers, and notably at Blackpool there were only two entries for it in each year I was there. The apparent lack of popularity of this style at these venues could be due to its usually involving several couples who dance in a formation or pattern. I was interested to observe that when it was judged at Blackpool, the judges went on to the balcony to judge rather than staying at the perimeter of the dance floor: this reminded me very much of the way Busby Berkley's film scenes are viewed. This style of dancing can involve an even more complicated form of training than the other styles of competitive dances. The cost of securing necessary uniformity in the performing group may also make it more expensive to perform, which could be why it appeared to be less popular at the time this research was being carried out.

The competitions at the beginners' level are often held in municipal halls, where the members of the audience pay a small fee for entrance to the event. Usually the audience for these events consists of family, friends and previous dancers. I have been told that the normal dancing life for competitive dancers is about ten years, although from those that I have spoken to it seemed that on the whole for many CBD becomes a life-long concern, at first as participants, later as expert observers, often

as partisans. At this stage in the competitions the judges pay particular attention to how the dancers dance to the prescribed and codified steps. Pauline Hodgins (1988) points out that both the Ballroom and Latin styles are now codified and institutionalised forms, having absorbed particular features within conventions, traditions and constraints over time. The institutionalised forms mentioned by Hodgins include the conditions of entry, the rules of the competition and the accepted syllabus. In these competitions there are usually about three judges, sometimes a few more. However many there are, all will have been professional dancers. The competing dancers are sequentially eliminated by the majority verdict, and the marking system, which is complex and will not be explained here is based on the skating system which has just been changed, is overseen by the British Dance Council. Most facets of the International Standard steps were classified in Britain in 1924, through the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, and their strict definitions endure until today. Hodgins (1988) points out that as with any dance style the evaluation process may be seen to conform to a culturally specific set of rules.

As the competitions become more prestigious there can be up to ten judges, as is the case at Blackpool. They are situated around the periphery of the floor with a pencil and score sheet on hand, and have less than two minutes to judge each of 24 couples at the beginning of each dance competition. These score sheets, which are said to emulate the 'skating style' of marking, are then taken to a site closed off from intruders. They are handed over to the scrutineers who then proceed to sum up the scores. After that usually six couples are called back for the next heat and so on; by the last round the last six are called back starting with number six and finally number one. They then all form a line and usually that is the time when they pose for a photograph. (In the past this was the most common style of photograph taken at these events but more recently pictures of the couples dancing have become more popular.)

The judges consist mostly of former dance champions, many of whom are now teaching and coaching. These are people who have a thorough and complete understanding of the rules and regulations of the competitions. Once established, rule knowledge can serve as a guide for determining the legal standards in the competition. Sound judgement gained through experience will allow the judge to meet the demands of a variety of officiating situations. In discussion with Mrs Gillian Mackenzie, the organiser of the Blackpool Dance Festival, she mentioned to me that top officials had told her that they enjoyed their job immensely. This sense of

enjoyment and fun appears to be strongly linked to a positive mental attitude and feelings of energy. Good officiating requires a lot of hard work, dedication and practice. Those in the upper echelons of judging spend their time travelling to as many as a dozen events annually in such places as Italy, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, plus the USA, as well as to cities around Britain. These judges may restrict themselves to judging either Ballroom or Latin depending on their interest and expertise, while others may be prepared to assess all dances. Judges have been reputed to say that much of their judging is based upon their training, experience and emotional response to the dancers. At the upper levels of competition the personalities of the performers must shine through in the performance; superb technique alone will not succeed at this level. (See the Blackpool chapter)

Over the years Harry Smith-Hampshire (1998, 2000, 2002) and Bryn Allen (2000), former dancers and now respected writers on CBD, have been very critical in *Dance News* of the lack of proper accreditation of coaches and adjudicators . Smith-Hampshire in an article in the *Dance News* compared CBD to athletics discussing a possible scenario when ‘examination of the scrutineers’ sheet seems to show that this or that judge might be favouring his or her own pupils’ (1998). This may not be the case but it is a problem that the governing board of athletics is anxious to avoid. Smith- Hampshire asks what the dancing bodies are going to do about this.

Another aspect of being qualified athletics judges is that they are expected to submit to regular re-appraisals of their skills. In dancing, to obtain a licence to judge a dance competition, other than a championship, in Britain, a professional has to be over 18 years and have successfully taken an Associate qualification with one of the BDC-recognised teaching associations. The Associate Member examination only requires knowledge of a set of prescribed dance figures up to Silver Medal standard.

To obtain a licence or licences to judge a championship anywhere in the world, the professional applicant in this country needs to have passed a Full Membership examination, with a BDC- recognised teaching association. The dance associations which are affiliated to The British Dance Council are the Allied Dancing Association, the British Association of Teachers of Dance, the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, the International Dance Teachers’ Association, the National Association of Teachers of Dancing, the Northern Counties Dance Teachers’ Association, the Scottish Dance Teachers’ Association and the United Kingdom Alliance. The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, as with the others, state that “their aims are to

improve the standard of dancing in the country and to cover a general approach to dancing.”(Harry Smith-Hampshire, 2000). Part of the British Dance Council is comprised of Members of the Associations. The candidate needs to be over 21 and have at least two years’ experience of teaching dancing. No further evidence of progress in adjudicating skills is called for. Smith- Hampshire in *Dance News* also calls for the use of umpires (invigilators) to monitor any anti-social behaviour, such as ‘backtracking’ on the dance floor (1998). This is where a couple moves back in the direction they have come from instead of moving forwards, which interrupts the flow of the following couples. It consequently gets reported to the Chairman of the Adjudicators and the offending couple could be sent off the floor.

In my assessment it seems that to win in CBD requires different approaches at different levels of competition. When the dancers are beginners the judges look to see if the couples know and understand the fundamental steps and rules of the dance, and the personalities of the dancers probably do not play much of a part. This seemed in keeping with what was being taught at The Starlight Ballroom, whereas a strong impression I had in the University Competitions was that the level of enthusiasm and energy in the dance was noted and seemed to be rewarded, perhaps even over that of the steps. For example, nearly all the main University events I went to were judged by young up-and-coming dance professionals and without exception the word ‘enthusiasm ‘ was used in the judgement. As previously commented, the performance aspects of the dancers in the upper levels seemed to be of paramount interest to the judges: these can include the Look, the personalities, their interpretation of the dance (which often deviates from the codified steps, especially in the Latin group of dances) and lastly but not least that special undefined quality that can attract both the judges and the spectators.

The spectators also play a very important part in CBD. Despite the coverage it gets in the media, especially television, CBD is not an activity that most of general public would go out of their way to watch at the dance venues. I repeatedly discovered that most of the spectators are personally involved in the competitions either through having been dancers or through being family and/or friends of dancers. For example, an Australian friend of mine has told me that her son took an interest in CBD at a fairly young age, since when she, her husband and her daughter have spent much of their spare time ferrying the boy to competitions and have become very interested and excited by what goes on. Over time people such as these become experts on what is to be expected from the judges. I see them in many ways, however, as being

more interested in the competitive side than in any aesthetic appeal it might have. Robbie, aged 15, sees CBD as a sport being conducted in a 'correct and particular way.' Admittedly, at this age he may have difficulty in verbalising, or be shy about admitting, that he perceives aspects of beauty in dance; on the other hand he may take it for granted or not see it as being of importance.

At the local lower competitive levels in the UK one is aware of the audience mostly of friends and family as perhaps not being as critical of the dancing as audiences at the upper levels. The University audiences are a very noisy lot, who will shout and cheer for their university even if they do not know the dancers, (although most do). As the day goes on they become more organised and one can hear concerted chants followed by opposing chants and even Mexican waves, as the various University groups get together. This type of audience is rather unlike those at most competitions as many of its members will not have much knowledge of dancing but are more likely to be there to support their dancing friends and their Universities.

The spectators at the Blackpool Festival, at the upper levels of the competition, are thought to be among the most critical and expert of all audiences. The tickets for this event are carefully distributed among the dance schools and there is always a demand for them. In this audience there will be a large number of former competitive dancers, teachers, and judges, as well as the usual families and friends. There will be high expectations of the way certain couples should perform, couples with critical assessment of how they should be judged. From a researcher's point of view to hear various members of the audience discuss who will win and who will not, and to hear 'it is not yet their time to win', makes one feel as though it has all been pre-judged in advance of the competition. However, when one walks away from the internal manipulations within the CBD world one can see that this activity appeals to spectators is because of the combination of fixed and improvised qualities. The fixed qualities are dictated by the music and the syllabus for the dance; the improvised aspects (the Performance) are the products of the couples' talents, teamwork, ingenuity and intuition. An example of this can be when a couple may be dancing in the codified manner, then the man makes a spontaneous unexpected movement and his partner reacts to this with another impulsive reaction: if the audience likes this they will cheer and clap, recognising what has happened.

There is a special quality that makes up this type of competition. These examples given are different in many aspects, and if one were to bring up other examples one

might find even more differences. The aim of the competitors is to excel, either over others, or over the level of their own previous best achievement. The essence of what is taking place in this activity is that well captured by Mead in the definition quoted earlier. How it is realised, however, depends on the stage of the competition. As in all forms of competition, how the competition may be run and judged rather depends on what the competitors stand to gain or lose. This also affects how the competitors and spectators behave. At the beginners' level mistakes may be made by the competitors and even by the judges, as they are often starting out in their various roles in CBD. The dancers will be sorry to lose but on the other hand it probably is not so important for them, whereas at the upper levels to win or lose could mean much less money, more or fewer invitations to teach and perform abroad and a reduced likelihood of being sponsored by companies such as Chrisanne, the CBD clothing company. The judges, the spectators, the teachers, all know this and, as a result, competition is brought into sharper focus and becomes a much more serious affair.

How far the branch of philosophy of aesthetics that deals with beauty enters into all this, is not clear. I have touched above on the extent to which environment and upbringing may impinge on the ability or even the willingness to see an aesthetic element in CBD. In the performing arts one expects to make a balanced assessment, looking at the grace, balance, timing, strength, the shock effect, the humour, the costumes, the beauty and the sensuality. Though many of those who take part in CBD, whether as performers, judges or onlookers, see it as a form of art with all the aesthetic qualities associated with it, quantification, and hence competition, enters only subjectively into aesthetic judgements, which are notoriously subject to change. In fact, only the fifth and last of the definitions of competition given earlier in this chapter, that is, 'a trial of ability in order to decide the superiority or comparative fitness of a number of candidates' (Simpson and Weiner 1989), would appear to have any bearing on this context. Although the intentions and taste of the competitors and the response of the judges and spectators are important in this study, their precise weight in deciding the results in a competition must be recognised as subject to variation from occasion to occasion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Looking for a partner.

It is worth while repeating here that competitive ballroom dancing is an offshoot of traditional ballroom dancing, a social activity in which the participants have the opportunity to express themselves through performance. This means that it entails interaction among persons brought together in a common wish both to retain and to exploit its sociality. The basic unit in competitive ballroom dancing is the pair, which is formed through the collaborative coming together of two persons of different sex. One would expect the coming together of such pairs and the choice by competitors of their partners, to occur most readily within a social ambit familiar to both. As was observed among those attending dance classes, it could even happen that the interest in dancing emerges only after partners have come together, in which case it could be a factor in cementing their union. On the other hand, I observed in the case of some dancers that it even appeared as if many of the simpler incentives for pairing become less important as the enthusiasm for dancing itself grew.

A common interest in a mode of self-expression leads easily first into emulation of those who express themselves most conspicuously and are most admired, and then among those who in their emulation wish of it to exceed that of their peers. It is probably this, which has moulded it into the two main ways in which it is competitive, either between teams or among pairs. An example of this was when the Oxford coach was talking about the Cambridge team he said that they were performing a dance in a certain way and that if Oxford did it in another way Oxford would come out the better. Teams generally form within the bounds of a social unit which has come into being through the operation of forces unrelated to dance – an educational body, a government department, a firm, a social stratum, or even at a local or national level – numerous environments in which there is the likelihood of competition among peers.

The formation of a dancing pair usually comes about in much the same way. Dancers themselves, however, appear to have difficulty in deciding on any specific criteria for their partners other than those, which relate directly or indirectly to skill. Physical characteristics play an important part, though often in a curiously asexual way. The topic is a recurrent one in the chat-line of the *Dancescape* web-site, as the following query from an unregistered, presumably relatively new, member demonstrates:

Just curious on what everyone uses to evaluate their partner. Anything other than the dance skill itself. Be specific, please, because just saying personality doesn't mean much. What specific trait of the personality. The little things that pisses you off. Try to concentrate on the 'partnership' bit.

This evoked a variety of responses, some of them quite narrow:

How well the person takes care of themselves is a big one to me..... Maybe you could call it hygiene or something.

Thinking styles. What do I mean? Emotive thinking versus logical thinking..... Basically, when we communicate well, then most everything else runs smoothly. Communication breaks down, then we have problems. Hence I think this is the most important trait.

Good communication is critical. But I think, more than all that, honesty is what makes it work..... What pisses me off? He asks me for my opinion (on a figure, etc.): I give it to him: he just says, 'no, you're wrong'..... Thing is, we have to understand that lady & man feel completely different things and are thinking in different ways when we dance together.

This last comment was made by only one respondent, but it may underline the point made by several others, of the importance of concordance between partners:

Okay...here's what makes our partnership work, and what you should look for in a partner:
Respect...Humility...Humor...Appreciation...Schedule and Commitment...Artistry versus technique...Patience and temper... Consideration and priorities...

I think it's really important to let your partner know he/she is doing a good job...a little compliment from a partner means more to me than a compliment from a coach... oh, boy, that makes my WEEK.

At another place on the same web-site there is a rather sober, but probably accurate, summary of the problem:

I've come to the conclusion that no matter how good you are it's difficult to find the right partner. So just because ThreeStep can dance wonderfully doesn't mean that the right woman will fall out of a tree. There's issues of height, body, shape, (i.e. leg length, broadness of torso), style and quality of movement, age, ability, personality, commitment, schedules, physical location, and so on. One man I know took two years to find a new partner after his old partnership broke up. He had many tryouts and probably any woman in the country would adore dancing with him, but it took a really long time for something to be just 'right' (Laura).

For all the ostensible outspokenness there is, perhaps out of modesty or delicacy, or perhaps for some other reason entirely, little mention in all this of what it is that is popularly believed to draw a man and a woman together. As a preliminary to reaching a conclusion about this, however, it is worth while paying some attention to the most commonly accepted motives for pair formation, and then go on to assessing the extent to which these may be operative in the competitive dance sphere.

To do so it is necessary to take a broad overview of pairing practices in the society in which competitive ballroom dancing has come to exist. Awareness of choice can be seen as a major correlate in the emergence of a sense of self (cf. Foucault 1988). What one chooses can cause major transformations in behaviour, relative to an earlier state before the choice had been made. One radical recent change has been an increasing responsibility of individuals for their own selection of partners. Having a sense of self also makes possible the development of the romanticised ideal in the selection of a partner with whom a relationship of close harmony, however transitory, can be maintained.

There are ways in which we may relate these phenomena to the choice of a partner in the field of competitive ballroom dancing. In CBD, the impression which the onlooker receives, with regard to the partnership on the dance-floor is, perhaps subconsciously, of something other than what it actually is. Most onlookers attach a romantic interpretation to the association between the pair even though they know that in reality this is not invariably the case. Relationships tend to be viewed in terms of roles, and the general role of lover is well understood in most societies, even though the specifics of that role will vary across them.

It is sometimes suggested that romantic love is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging with the development of a particular sense of self over the past few hundred years (Foucault: 1986). This is, however, contradicted not only by reference to the poetry of the classical period and of Eastern civilisations but also by the existence of very similar expressions in the praise poetry of languages such as Shona in Central Africa, where contact with Western emotional forms has been recent and had little impact (cf. Aaron Hodza and George Fortune 1979).

Values that exist and are upheld at the cultural level and are supported by the institutions in society such as schools, family, and religion, will affect the attitudes and norms held by the group and individuals within the society as to how the

relationship between the sexes should be structured. On the whole, however, peer standards have a stronger impact on people's standards than do other societal parameters, such as parental and religious standards.

In a few studies, predictors of attraction between men and women have been compared with predictors of other types of attraction. Jeffrey Nevid (1984) had subjects rate the desirability of several physical features including the characteristics of age and race, as well as personal qualities, which include sensitivity, honesty and warmth. Both men and women evaluated personal characteristics as more important than physical ones in a long-term, meaningful relationship. Douglas Kenrick and Melanie Trost (1989) have described data on men's and women's minimum standards for a partner's intelligence. Females were found to increase their standards for intelligence in a partner with each increase in the level of relationship involvement. Men, however, were less selective.

In research by Susan Sprecher and Kathleen McKinney (1993) a major theme that emerged was there were gender differences and ideals of behaviour in close relationships. Generally they found that men were more permissive towards and interested in sexuality than women. For example, men were more likely than women to assume that others were sexually interested in them (to misinterpret sexual interest or intent). They suggested that there were several explanations for gender differences in close relationships. The differential socialisation of men and women in our society, including the transmission of traditional sex roles, contributes to these differences; that is, men have been led to have greater permissiveness. Similarly women have been raised to be more conservative and cautious. Related to this explanation is that men and women have acquired different sexual scripts for their own gender, with the script for male actors containing more permissive 'roles' and 'lines' than the script for females. Whether this has any actual influence on the selectivity of males may, in CBD, be doubted. In CBD, in fact, and especially in the search for partners, one gets the impression that the female is more selective. In spite of a shortage of male partners, at least three of my female informants said that if a partner did not behave in a certain manner they would no longer dance with him, whereas the converse was never stated by the male dancers. This was also a prevailing theme in the film *Shall we Dance* (1995). It is worth concurrently drawing attention to the way in which, in the context of CBD, the tradition in the dance is that the man should lead and the woman follow persists unchallenged in a generation where the overall equality of the sexes is often asserted.

The foregoing may appear to constitute an overstatement of what may for the actual participants in competitive ballroom dancing be an excessively detailed exploration of what they possibly see as a relatively unimportant aspect of the reasons for which partners come together. There is probably no real necessity for the physical aspects of gender to enter ostentatiously into the mutual choice of dance partners. Were it seen too obviously to do so, it would be likely to sully the enjoyment and attention of an appreciable proportion of the onlookers, as well as perhaps prejudicing some of the judges. On the other hand, the *romantic* representation of sexual love, whether it is really present or a mere image, certainly does make up a large part of the picture which, consciously or unconsciously, each competing couple aims at presenting. It certainly constitutes a significant part of what a number of onlookers search for and often claim to observe in their performance. Whatever the dancers' relationships with each other may be, they have as much of a need to incorporate an enactment of it into their presentation, as any other performers of public entertainments would have. For example, in the rumba, which is called the dance of romance in CBD, such an enactment at the Blackpool Festival almost certainly enters into or influences the impressions of the judges who focus upon the dancers' interpretation as well as on their performance.

In the world away from dance, certain characteristics are thought to be important for an ideal sexual or social partner. Obviously this varies from culture to culture. Western culture, however, is the one in which most of the Competitive Ballroom Dancing world is embedded, and in it there are certain traits which are seen to be important. Physical attraction and mental attraction (part of which could be a compatible sense of humour), trust, and reliability are among the characteristics also thought to be desirable in a social partner, others not mentioned may depend on individuals' preferences. In CBD how a couple touch each other; how close they are to each other; certain of their movements especially in the Latin style of dances; the way they look and behave with each other during the dance and when coming on to the dance-floor. These are to be seen within the character of the dance and how the performer displays it. From the outside of competitive ballroom dancing certainly some of these movements can be regarded as sexual performances or acts of love, if not in reality, certainly in the eyes of some onlookers and in the expressions used by some media commentators. On television, in one series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, a couple who danced together were thought to be having an affair because in their dance performances they were able to portray a loving couple so well. The tabloid

newspapers ran this story for some time and it was only after the couple won the competition that the dancers and their families completely denied all the allegations. Thus they were able to keep the idea of a dance of perfect sexual love in the mind of the spectators until the end of the performance.

Hanna (1988) discusses how dance conveys ideas of sex and gender in modern Western society. She states that Albert Bandura's (1972) modelling theory provides an explanation insofar as it claims that an individual tends to reproduce attitudes, acts and emotions exhibited by an observed model (live or symbolic, perhaps taken from film or television):

A model can be cognitively registered and used or remain in the subconscious memory until a relevant situation reactivates it. A key premise of this theory of learning is that the model must attract attention (1988:11).

Important too is the observer's sensory capacity, arousal level and past experience, which can affect receptivity. Furthermore, retention of what is seen depends on the viewer's ability to remember and rehearse through the varying symbolic coding of dance forms, images, words, or actual behaviour.

Hanna states that there is also evidence of learning through motor reproduction of the model, such as the adoption of otherwise unused gestures, poses and facial expressions, and further evidence that learning itself must make a difference to the learner. In CBD, the learning process involves a great deal more than acquiring the necessary steps and movements essential to social dancing and the choice of a partner, however verbally inadequate the descriptions of the requirements posted at the websites and in the advertisements, it always entails a mental picture or listing of what is really required. More than simple imitation, modelling includes an individual acting in a way in which the model would be inclined to behave under similar circumstances, even although the observer had never witnessed the model's behaviour in such circumstances. As hanna puts it, 'That is, modelling influences can lead to generative and innovative behaviour' (1988,12). A hypothetical example of this could be if a dancer/choreographer wishes to portray in the dance, certain activities which are said to happen in Latin America, but are not necessarily within the dance repertoire, they may conjure up ideas from a film or a book and incorporate them into the dance.

If sexuality and dance are seen as a closely linked part of the activity, we need to consider how important this may be in the selection of a partner for the dance presentation. On the first occasion that I was exposed to competitive ballroom dancers, at a special performance of *Come Dancing*, a dancer came up to the Oxford University team's coach and said, 'Vicky, I am looking for a partner - can you recommend someone?' The only question that Vicky asked of the woman was, 'How tall are you?' At that time I did not know Vicky well enough to ask why she said this; but I did not forget what she had said. Then later on, when I started looking at the advertisements in the recognised United Kingdom dance newspaper *Dance News* and at the website called *Dancescape* I noticed such advertisements as:

- 1) Naomi B., DOB 23.07.86 seeks Junior Boy of a high standard to continue Modern and Latin competitions.
- 2) Thomas S. is back and looking for a partner to commence in Youth/Amateur championships in Modern/Latin. Ht: 5'8", DOB 13.4.84.
- 3) Christine R. 167cm Age 24, seeks gentleman for Latin competition Intermediate level in London.
- 4) Lady 5'5" seeks dedicated, ambitious man to continue Ballroom/Latin competitions, would consider Ballroom only for right partner. Experienced open competitor.
- 5) Gentleman 5'10" slim build, seeks slim, stylish, dedicated lady for Senior Pre-Champ ballroom competitions.. I am located in the Northern Home Counties and am willing to travel.

It will be noted that in the first three of these advertisements, but not in the latter two, there is a very precise mention of the age of the advertiser; the first two would be looking for partners to compete in the Junior groups, while the woman in her twenties in the adult groups. The fifth one would be seeking a woman over 35 to dance in the Senior group but the fourth woman has left it open. The *Dance News* advertisements carried no suggestion of any association between partners outside competitive ballroom dancing.

As one of the arts that offer models of gender attitudes and behaviour, dancing realistically or symbolically represents courtship, climax, male chauvinism, feminist thought, inter-personal exchanges, group interaction, casual relations and stable associations. The array of dance messages of sexuality and gender may lead to reinforcing ongoing models, acquiring new responses, weakening or strengthening inhibitions over fully elaborated patterns in a person's repertoire, and facilitating performances of previously learned behaviour that was encumbered by restraints.

It should be noted that the dancing of sexuality and gender can be detached from professional dancers, who do not necessarily in real life live out the roles they perform. The bodies are at once the instrument of dance, tools of the choreographer, objects of perception and subjects who perceive. Gender involves private experience and public display, both everyday and theatrical, which may not necessarily be conflated.

Since the instrument of dance and sexuality is one, that is, the human body, the very motion of dancing attracts attention. Human alertness to moving objects and the capacity for repetition of actions are inborn. The intimate experiences of people with their bodies influence their responses to dance. Embodiment in dance, both expressive and communicative, can mediate between sexual stimulus and response. A dance performance can embody the dancer as a sexual human being, together with the perceptions of dancer and audience as influenced by their knowledge of the past and present history of the body, sex, gender, and dance in society.

Theorists in gender study such as Candace West and Don Zimmerman state that in the 1960s and 1970s when teaching about sex and gender they were careful to distinguish the one from the other. Sex was seen as ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones and physiology while gender was described as an achieved status (2000). Recently, however Anna Tripp, a lecturer in literature has asserted that 'certain theorists have begun to question the clarity and usefulness of the sex-gender distinction' (2000:12). For example it is thought that sex, far from being a 'given' and stable base onto which the variable construction of gender are grafted 'it is more protean, more culturally mediated or shaped, and more difficult to isolate from gender that at first might be supposed' (2000:12). Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* asks:

Can we refer to a "given" sex or a "given" gender without enquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is 'sex' anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such 'facts' for us? (1990:6-7)

As Tripp says 'It is now virtually a truism that gender is seen as "cultural" and sex is "biological" and "anatomical" ' (2000:13) although writers such as Suzanne Kessler and Anne Fausto-Sterling, Professor of Medical Sciences, are seriously questioning this statement. Kessler argues that at times 'doctors make decisions ...on the basis

of shared cultural values that are unstated, perhaps even unconscious, and therefore considered objective rather than subjective' (1990:8).

Cynthia Novak, an anthropologist and dancer (1993) when describing ballet sees gender as meaning 'sets of characteristics and practices attributed to a male or female person as distinguished from either the sexuality/sexual preferences of a person.' (1993:34). Nevertheless, using the concept of sex in discussions of discrimination between male and female roles reinforces the idea that foremost and always the female or male represents a reciprocal sexual possibility. This in its turn influences the ways in which the distinction appears in performance. As a gender role for most people it is a perceived body in dance, in an anatomically revealing dress, or stereotypic male or female costume, which tends to conflate mental and physical responses (arousal and sexual identity), gender, and the historically perceived relationship of dance and sex. Although the sociologist Michael Kimmel (2000:2) argues that there are different meanings of gender, for example he argues that they can vary from society to society as meanings of femininity and masculinity vary within one culture over time; they can change over the course of a person's life and may even vary among different groups within one culture, such as between a poor heterosexual woman and a middleclass lesbian.

An analogy may also be drawn with the mating displays of birds and animals, in which movement is the key to arousal, and where it is also a means towards the finding of a partner. It might be interesting in the light of this to investigate the question of contention between male dancers for particular partners, and the extent to which the predilections of the female may operate towards its eventual outcome. This is, however, likely to be less relevant to the relatively sedate world of CBD than it is to less formal and controlled types of performance.

It seems probable, however, that the principal sexual content of ballroom dancing lies more in the eye of the beholder than in that of the dancer. Certainly none of my respondents spoke of sexuality and their dancing. By the very nature of what they do dancers have to display themselves. For the beholder there may be more to it than just that, though it is probable that an element of suppressed excitement may, however covertly, always play a part. Hanna suggests that, 'the devices for encapsulating meaning in dance seem to operate within one or more of eight spheres' (1988:15). Her use of the term 'encapsulating' is interesting: it highlights the barrier erected between the dancers and their immediate environment. Contact with

each other does not carry the specific meaning it might under other circumstances. Their training enables them to touch each other in places where such a gesture might otherwise provoke a reaction, which would be inappropriate here. However determined the search for a partner may be, there is inevitably, in its outcome, a distancing element. Hanna's (1988: 15) eight spheres include the dance event, when people go to the event to be seen socially or to find sexual partners, dance viewing being incidental; the total human body in action, as in girl or boy watching; the whole pattern of the performance, which may emphasize form, style, feeling or drama; the sequence of unfolding movement, including who does what to whom in dramatic episodes; specific movements and how they are performed, for example one dancer parodying the movement of another; the intermeshing of movements with other communication modes such as costume; the emotional turn-on through projected sensuality or raw animality; and dance as a vehicle for another medium such as serving as a background for a performer's poetry recitation.

In this context there are many ways of describing dance. According to Hanna (1988:46), for cross-cultural purposes 'it can be usefully conceptualized as human behaviour that is purposeful, from the dancer's perspective.' She also notes that 'dance exists in three dimensions, of space, one of time and another in the realm of imagination' (1988:47). The sexuality inherent in the association of male and female may be one reason why ballroom dancing is so widespread an activity and why in such dancing gender is or appears to be coterminous with sexuality.

Yet this is an aspect about which many of the dancers I have interviewed have tended to be quite reticent. When I was in Blackpool in 2000 I met Sylvia, who is from Australia but since 1998 has been living in London. She said that she was happy to be interviewed and for her name to be used in my thesis. She has been coming to Blackpool from Australia since 1993, dancing mostly modern or ballroom. She is presently looking for a new dance partner; her last partner was from Germany but he was unhappy in the UK and so has now returned to Germany. Sylvia thought that by coming to live in Britain she would have a better chance of finding a suitable partner. This was not easy to understand, since CBD is extremely popular in Australia, but she seemed to feel that there was a larger selection of potential partners in Europe. At the time of the interview she had two potential partners, one from Italy and one from Germany. They have both sent her videotapes of their dances in order to see whether she will consider them as partners. Once again I was aware of a possible discrepancy: living at a distance, I wondered how long it might take for them to

accustom themselves to being her partner. It was possible that the association might not last long enough for preparation for competition. She has also advertised for partners through her teachers and the dance papers. Sylvia is a quite sophisticated, attractive young woman who said that taking part in competitive ballroom dancing provides her with a life style that she enjoys, and the love of it helps her to ignore the internal politics of it all.

Such a hit-and-miss approach may be contrasted with the way in which appropriate partners are selected during the trials at Oxford University, in which there is also the selection of dancers for the teams. As the advertisements indicate, height is important. So is body shape, though this would be less easy to describe with any precision in a newspaper advertisement: particular attention is always paid to how the couple seem to suit each other in this regard. Another very important aspect is standard of dancing, that is, at what stage a person is in dance technique and experience. At Oxford judgement of the standard of the dancing was made by team coaches together with past and present members of the teams. Subjective sexual feelings were of minor account.

I have two examples of this from my time with the team. The first year I went to watch team practices I saw a young man and woman who were obviously very fond of each other but not dancing with each other. Every time there was a break she would go and sit on his knee and if it was a 'non practice' dance they would dance together. Then the following year, when I was with the team most of the time, they were dancing together, and towards the end of the academic year they became engaged to be married. When I went back the following year to follow up my research they were not dancing together. I asked about this and their explanation was that previously as they were studying for their doctoral theses they did not have much free time.

Nevertheless, they did very much want to dance and be together. As their dancing was at much the same level and they did look rather good together, everyone had agreed that they could partner each other in the dancing. In the summer of 2004 they got married, and on reflection felt that perhaps they were more suited to dance with other people. Now that they were married and could be together at any time they did not mind dancing with others in competitions and had agreed to do so.

Another couple felt much the same way, but as they were at very different standards of dance, the coaches and team said that they should dance with other people, that is, not with each other. The young man, who was the better dancer, said that he would resign from the team. As it might have been difficult to replace him at that stage of rehearsal for competitions, it was decided to give them a chance. They practised as much as they could and did dance together in some of the team events, but the teams and coaches remained critical. They too became engaged and still hope to continue to dance together.

One of my respondents in discussing this topic said:

Well, we would all like a good dance partner, and often, once we get one, our expectations change. Take a female mutual friend. She took up dancing again later on in life and decided that she wanted a really good partner. She went to the "Rivoli" (a very popular old-fashioned type of ballroom) where she met a good male dancer. He was quite a lonely guy and after a while she seemed to become the centre of his world. They started dancing three times a week but his personality (which may have accounted for his loneliness) eventually drove her up the wall. She tried to end the partnership without hurting his feelings, but of course in the event she did. He has since found another dance partner because there is always another lady out there looking for a male dancing partner. There always seem to be more women than men in ballroom dancing.

Certainly there does appear to be a significant disparity in the numbers of men compared with women among the enthusiasts.

Another respondent told me:

She started dancing around the same time as I did. A couple of years ago she met a man who was a beginner in dancing. She had been dancing for about seven years, and now he has become so keen and proficient that they are dancing in competitions.

They are also described as an 'item', that is they are living together. On the other hand, she has also known women who have advertised for male dance partners, and while the women were only interested in dancing, the men had quite other ideas. 'One of my friends was even quizzed about her financial situation.' It is of course possible that such an enquiry could be relatively innocent or even unselfish: he might have been concerned lest she had for his sake been spending more on her 'Look' than she could really afford. In whatever case, this led to their breaking up.

In this informant's opinion dancing partnerships seem to work best if the couples are married. 'Looking at the top professionals, most of them are either married or living

together' As far as I can tell this is indeed the case with many of the professionals and was confirmed by other informants. She thought that this was because dance had become a major part of their lives. There is a need for a couple to be comfortable with each other. She discussed how different people are to dance with. It is a convention that it is always the man who leads which means that the women are very dependent on their partners. Some men are aggressive on the dance floor and by making their own way regardless fail to protect their partners from occasional impacts with other dancers. This a popular anxiety among female dancers and was one of the main concerns of the heroine in the Japanese film *Shall We Dance?* This film highlighted those aspects dancers wish for from their ideal partner, that is, to be able to trust each other and have full co-operation with each other on the dance floor. My informant also talked about an article written by Lorraine Barry, in which the author describes what it was like dancing with her previous partner (to whom she was married). After they split up and when she first met and danced with her present husband, Luca, she was sure that it would not work out, as it seemed so different from her previous dancing experience. Nevertheless, they persevered and now they are top world-class dancers as well as being husband and wife. This particular informant herself dances with her husband socially and encourages him to work for competitions, but, as he is less experienced than she is, he does not dance with her in competitions. Usually she dances with someone from the same dance school.

When I first met another of my informants she had been dancing at Blackpool with a dance partner for whom she had little respect, as she felt that he really was not serious about his dancing. He did not always arrive for their practice sessions, and now they no longer dance together. She felt let down by him; as a result of this and because she has now reached her forties she no longer enters competitions. It has to be said that this informant is of Afro-Caribbean origin and that this may make it difficult for her to find suitable partners as she preferred to dance in competition with someone of her own ethnic background; there are few male Afro-Caribbean competitive ballroom dancers and those there are have often taken up dancing with their partners already decided. It is not that a racially identical couple is likely to be unacceptable; in fact in Latin dancing there is often a deliberate effort for a couple to appear to be of contrasting complexions. In this case my informant was quite shy and felt ill at ease with a partner whom she saw as coming from a very different background. Nevertheless she and her family regularly attend dance competitions as members of the critical audience.

Another informant is quite short and over the past year has for this reason had some difficulty in finding a suitable partner. There have been partners whom she did not like, sometimes on account of their personal habits, and when there was a problem she would speak to her coach about this. On the whole she thought that she would put up with quite a lot from a dance partner if she felt that he was a good dancer, and that they were suited to each other on the dance floor. Most dancers agree that rapport between dancers is essential, whether driven by romantic attraction to each other or simply by a shared passion for the dance.

While browsing the website *Dancescape* I came upon a chat site of dancers entitled 'Bad Partners Better Than None At All?' A dancer calling herself Quickspirit makes the following comments:

I am very picky about what I want in a partner. I am extremely dedicated, almost to an unhealthy degree, and I want someone who is willing to put their entire being into our dancing together. I realise, however, that this is rare. If not impossible to find (sigh).

Which is what got me thinking, does it make any sense to dance with someone just to be dancing with someone? Not as a partnership, though, just more of a social type thing. I figure this would allow me to follow, which is just impossible practicing alone...

On the other hand, the time spent dancing with this fellow might be put to better use improving my technique.
Any opinions?
A Very Lonely Quickspirit

Some of the replies were:

Better to dance alone.
You'd get to practice following, but why waste time following someone who may not be leading right, and then develop bad habits.
Loneliness. It'll go away soon.
ThreeStep

I would dance with the lousy dancer because lousy dancers need some lovin too. Many girls dance under my level but I don't let that stop me from dancing with them.
Bob B

I'm in a partnerless position right now too, and I'd dance with a nice friendly fun, but otherwise non-optimal partner a bit, rather than being completely alone. My reasoning is that it would be fun to get together with someone once or twice a week for about an hour each time to dance around and actually do some following. And then I'd also practice on my own, to work on a technique.
I wouldn't worry about someone hurting your technique much if you

are only dancing with him a little bit.
Laura

There must be some studios in your area where you can go and dance with different guys for practice. Our studio has beginners bronze classes open to the general public. Rarely does a good guy come, but some of the guys are getting better as they start having private lessons. Anyway I always go so that I can practice following. Sometimes my husband goes too but he is still very involved with his work and so doesn't have much time to practice.
Nancy

I guess that I should mention that I don't practice what I preach (I'm weak and can't say no to women). But! Dancing with poor leaders is bad.
Do something!
ThreeStep (see previous page)

Then there was the drift into the transcendental, with reversion to an idiom somewhat suggestive of ecstatic climax:

Poor quickspirit. May you find that wonderful, perfect moment again. How good of you to find it once, at all-not everyone can recognise that. You may have the soul of a poet. Blessings to you.

In that spirit, do show the grace of thanksgiving and dance with some other poor soul, less blessed. They will know something of your heart from that, and you will feel and learn something too. Humility will make you stronger and vulnerability will give you courage.

Of course it won't be 'dancing' really, the way you've had the bright, singular chance to know, but that won't leave you either, and it will inform everything you learn and do. People will be glad to know that.
Pax

- as the response also suggests:
How beautiful...I'm speechless.
WOW, you have made my night.
Quickspirit.

Culminating with the last answer in this section, which came from an unnamed person who more matter-of-factly still suggested:

How's this for a compromise?
Aside from all the practice lessons you have when you are partner-less, add two more hours each week to dance with someone you won't consider a partner. That is if you have the time.

Enactment of romance remains the essential core of CBD, whatever the rapprochement between partners and whatever the origins of the individual steps. It

represents the heart of competitive ballroom dancing. Successful competitors draw upon a vast range of personal qualities, of which perhaps the most elusive is a strong inclination towards romance. With it they achieve ultimate heights of expression, their bodies unconsciously celebrating the passion, which they feel for dancing; without it, they become programmed automata, precise in their movements yet leaving us, the onlookers, strangely indifferent.

The romantic quotient, in fact, may be the only element in common among contemporary ballroom dancers at the competition level. From that point dancing divides and subdivides into styles and schools. The potential, the appearance, of romance may persist and perhaps be periodically renewed, but a flattening of emotion supervenes, during which the idea of, perhaps the wish for, its playing a dominant role, becomes more and more the a function of the onlooker. For the performers, however, the rapprochement between partners comes to depend on a variety of more or less mundane factors. Before considering these in detail it may be worth while taking a look at non-romantic, non-sexual pairing, between male and female in environments outside as well as within that of competitive ballroom dancing.

The other forms of male-female partnership

The extent to which sex does enter into these is a matter open to almost endless dispute. In one conversation I had with a professional dancer she indicated to me that as far as she was concerned dancing was a job for her, one she loved, and she would just consider her partner as part of the job in hand, if she got on well with the person that was better, but if not she would just grin and bear it. An association of this kind is as instrumental as any in any form of employment, or as that between an actor and a suddenly introduced understudy in a supporting role. Such non-sexual partnerships make up a proportion of work relationships, and it is hardly surprising to find them extending into the world of competitive ballroom dancing despite the emphasis it puts on gender dichotomy. In effect, there is an aspect of CBD partnering which despite all outward appearances can be considered as gender-free as the relationship of a workman to the tools of his trade.

One aspect of partnering which needs to be touched on, on account both of its similarity to, and its distinction from, the establishment of partnerships in CBD, is that which arises in, and sometimes from, genuine romance in the course of ordinary social life. A couple will frequently establish a partnership and then go on to maintain

it at social dances, or decide that learning to dance is an appropriate prelude to marriage. The relevance of this to CBD can be seen in the fact that both are often associated with attendance at dance schools, which may either lead on to or provide the first steps into a more strictly sexual partnership, or generate a genuine wish to proceed to CBD. Mention has been made in an earlier chapter of the possibility that dance schools may even be attended in the first place, more often by men than women, as a means of making contact with members of the opposite sex. Here the use of dance is not for its own sake but as a means to an end; learning to dance can be an early step on the path to selection of a partner for purposes other than that of dance. The romance, which onlookers wish to detect in CBD, exaggerated as it may be by the varying levels of competence with which it is displayed, comes to fruition more frequently on the social dance floor than in the 'sacred space' devoted to competition.

The purposes of inter-sexual partnerships which exclude conspicuous romance between the partners are in many instances no different from those of other associations tending to circumstantial advantage either material or in prestige: business partnerships, collaborations within professions, teaming up for aggression or defence, teacher and pupil, comic and sidekick. It is worth noting that although stage performers seek publicity and are granted it, this is not a characteristic of competitive ballroom dancers, whose fame, no matter how greatly they excel, is likely to be confined to a narrow circle of colleagues, competitors and judges and a rather narrower one of aficionados, and whose material gains are rarely if ever considerable.

Styles, schools and their influence on choice of partner.

Not every dancer is able to excel in all forms of dance; in fact within CBD few of the male dancers, if any, can, this was shown in the questionnaire at Oxford and also in discussion with other male dancers. Before there is any choice of partner by a person who wishes to be a dancer there have to be decisions taken about the type of dance in which he or she would prefer to specialize, about who is to function as instructor and/or model, and about such matters as suitability of the appearance of the dancer to the look of the dance. Many dancers depend on their teacher to decide who would be a suitable partner for them, having the confidence in their knowledge as experts on the dancers' ability. Often dancers will know what dance they prefer and usually this is what they do best, however, it is not always easy to judge who would be their best partner. Teachers of the various schools do not teach in isolation, many not only

teach, but are judges at various levels and see dancers from other establishments. Also a teacher can have special abilities, for example the captain of the Cambridge team and his new dance partner (his previous partner and fiancée being no longer eligible to dance for Cambridge) wanted some extra help to improve their technique; their coach referred them on to another who would give them the extra coaching that they required as well as being one who would recognise their particular skills.

Summing up, one is led to conclude that in choosing a partner for competitive ballroom dancing the presence of desirable qualities in the partner extraneous to dancing ability, to a great extent the conscious or unwitting degree and nature of sexual rapport between partners, but more cogently non-sexual physical matching which facilitates congenial and aesthetically pleasing movement, are of great importance. So are the preferred type and style of dancing and the dress and ornament sense of the partner. But in the end it is the desire to dance which outweigh most other factors, and in the last resort almost any partner will do, as long as that desire remains and the partner is felt to be co-operative and trustworthy.

CHAPTER FIVE

The making of 'the Look'

In this chapter I explore the elements focussed on the adornment of the dancers' bodies that are brought together to create the particular impact of this form of dance. In the previous chapter I considered how the body was used. Here I consider how it was adorned.

As a prelude to a review of the changing aspects of clothing and adornment in CBD since its beginnings it is appropriate to touch briefly on some factors in the wider field of aesthetics. Hanna (2003: 29-55) has pointed out that dance, because of its diversity, has given rise to a variety of aesthetic criteria across the cultures in which it is practised. These are based on the notions in the cultural background of appropriateness, competence and excellence, which in their turn derive from individual experience and the knowledge of the innate value judgements prevailing in the relevant culture. Her survey of the criteria examines elements of content, choreography, technique, efficacy and stylistic schools among the aesthetic markers. Anca Giurchescu, discussing the deviation from traditional performances by Romanian dance teams in Denmark (2003: 163-171), has highlighted the role of the audience in inducing aesthetic amendments when dances are expatriated. In her introduction to dance aesthetics (2003: 152-162) Adrienne Kaeppler emphasizes that cross-culturally it is not the empirical details but the concepts used from society to society for evaluation that are important, and that considering different systems and structures of methods of evaluation can perhaps convey more perceptive views of one's own aesthetic system. (2003) A perhaps extreme but illuminating example of this is called up in Grau's demonstration that fire and language play an equal part with dance in the aesthetic system of the Tiwi (2003: 173-177) – as indeed, they do in that of the Kaluli of New Guinea (Schieffelin 1977: 21-24).

The aesthetic element in CBD can consequently be evaluated as essentially based in Western European culture and its closest expatriated derivatives. It may be said to reside in its least mutable form in bodily management and the rules for its expression, dealt with in earlier chapters, but there can be no doubt that one of its most obvious aesthetics factors is the one most subject to change. Ballroom dancing since its inception has been an activity in which the participants take it upon themselves to be conspicuous. In its competitive form the importance of the appearance of those taking part is especially noted, not only by the onlookers and

the judges but by the competitors themselves. They are there not only to compete and to show off their skills, but to present a colourful spectacle for those who have come there to watch them. It is my intention in this chapter to discuss and evaluate 'the Look' of the dancer/performer, and how it affects the performer, the judges and the audience, as well as examining its economics and effect and the ways in which material culture transforms the costume, appearance and comportment surrounding dance competitions. What will be considered is, among other things, the conjunction of clothing, make-up, and jewellery, and the way in which they all come together as bodily adornment, together with some mention of the attitudes and expressions adopted on the dance floor. The primary focus of the chapter, however, will be on the purpose of costume and on how adornment is experienced and its possible meaning for the dancer and the onlookers as well as for those who are there to judge the competition officially.

The term 'the Look' is used here as a convenient description of the overall appearance of competitive ballroom dancers from an etic perspective. What is meant is something over and above simply the way they look. The concern of anthropologists in the nineteenth century to demonstrate the universality of adornment has been supplanted by a feeling that there is a need to discern and describe not only the actual practices and meaning of human adornment but also those of particular garments (Barnes and Eicher 1992). Joanne Entwistle (2000: 43) points out, however, that with those and other recent anthropologists there remains a concern to define 'an appropriately universal and all-inclusive term to describe all the things people do to or put on their bodies in order to make the human form, in their eyes, more attractive.' In the context of CBD such a term needs to be widened to include other non-dance components, such as facial expressions and the manner in which entrances into and exits from the 'sacred space' of the dance-floor are made, together with ancillary movements and gestures aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the competing couple.

Entwistle (2000) states that the terms employed most commonly by anthropologists in dealing with appearance are 'dress' and 'adornment'. Dress suggests covering the body with garments, including jewellery which can be put on and taken off, while adornment includes the accessories to this, in particular the aesthetic aspects of altering the body, implying not only permanent decoration such as scarification or tattooing but also piercing to allow the temporary inclusion of items of decoration. 'Dress', however, does not exclude the possibility of encompassing 'adornment' in its

aesthetic sense: getting dressed means in most societies deciding what to wear in terms of appearance as well as function. It is here that the fashion system comes into its own: it directs what to wear and endows it with beauty and desirability.

To express all this we do in fact need an even wider term than that which Ruth Barnes and Joanne Eicher (1992) were concerned to supply, and confessed their inability to do so. In this thesis I am using 'the Look' to represent all the factors mentioned above. It is not a term I have invented, unprovoked and unassisted, but one which has emerged out of the research. As far I have been able to determine neither the dancers themselves nor other persons involved in CBD have any comprehensive term of their own, although when 'The Look' is used in conversation with them they understand clearly and immediately what is intended. With regard to individuals, I have heard terms about a person's appearance, or how they look, but never one expressed about a general term. This has led me to suppose that despite the attention they pay to its component parts its function as a whole is subjectively regarded as too self-evident to need individual consideration by them. When what they are doing becomes an object of anthropological study, however, it is obviously convenient to have such a term at one's disposal.

Anthropology and 'the Look': methods and approaches

'The Look' is, of course, not something peculiar to dance. An anthropologist is impelled, sometimes obliquely, to recognize its importance in a variety of human activities and pastimes. All around the globe humans seem to be constrained to adorn or clothe themselves, and adapt their attitudes and behaviour accordingly, often without any clear reason for doing so. Clothing, like language and tool fashioning, is a characteristically human product; unlike the other two activities, it is confined to humans. What function do clothes fulfil in themselves? Some hypotheses suggest that clothing is a human response to environmental conditions and the need for protection from elements, which cause discomfort. However Ronald Schwarz (1979:25) argues that, Australian aborigines, and the indigenous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, who are exposed to cold conditions, do not wear clothes for this purpose, but prefer to wear body paint, to adorn themselves, and to build shelters to protect themselves from the elements.

Early authors such as Yrjö Hirn (1900), suggested that clothes were originally seen by their wearers as protection, not so much against perceptible physical elements, as against supernatural forces. Hirn cited early anthropological work done in the New

Hebrides, where many of the local people covered themselves in the most scrupulous manner, not, he claimed, from any sense of decency, but to avoid magic influence, as for a man to view the nakedness even of another man was considered as being most dangerous. Where belief in the power of supernatural forces to cause illness, death and even pregnancy was common, the use of adornment and other forms of disguise or concealment to protect oneself and the community against harmful influences was also of common occurrence.

Another hypothesis about the function of clothes is, of course, the familiar one of shame; one exemplified in the story of Eve in the Bible. Similar tales are told in American Indian folk tales. According to this theory clothing was adopted to conceal the genital organs out of a sense of shame or modesty. This theory is no longer regarded as tenable and has been ascribed to the moral climate of the nineteenth century, though of course there is considerable support for it in prescriptions for behaviour codified much earlier in Europe and the Middle East. Authorities such as Knight Dunlap put modesty and nudity in what they saw as a proper perspective as in this statement of his:

Any degree of clothing, including complete nudity, is perfectly modest as soon as we become thoroughly accustomed to it. Conversely, any change of clothing, suddenly effected, may be immodest if it of a nature to be conspicuous....Clothing itself has not modesty or immodesty (1928:66)

The contention that what in a defined context is conspicuous is *ipso facto* undesirable is relevant to the reactions to the attempts of some male dancers to make themselves noticeable in standard ballroom dancing by introducing changes in their costume. This will be discussed later.

One of the earliest hypotheses put forward by anthropologists was one suggesting attraction as a motive for the origin of adornment. This is certainly the case in CBD, though hardly as described by Havelock Ellis (1900) and Edward Westermarck (1891), who maintained that the original purpose of clothing was to attract attention to the genitals and to their erotic functions by hiding them and thus increasing the observer's sexual interest in the wearer. The clothing component of the Look in CBD amounts, as will be shown, to rather more than simple titillation. A modified version of the attraction theory has, however, been advanced by Mario Bick . He suggests that all persons past the age of puberty may be treated as consumers and objects of

consumption in the 'sexual market place' (1968). In this context, adornment can be seen as:

A symbolic system which provides a major indication of the willingness to participate in this market, at any particular moment, as an object of consumption...Adornment then is the frequently unconscious medium for each individual's sexual message (1968:3).

The desire to draw attention to oneself, or to communicate the state of one's availability or non-availability in the sexual market place, are important, but none of the hypotheses put forward so far is adequate for providing a general theory.

Then there is the status or ranking theory. This is where the origin or principal function of clothes is to differentiate members of society into age, sex and class or occupation (Craik: 1994). Countless examples of this may be found throughout the world. For example in China, traditionally when a woman is getting married it is the custom for her to wear red clothing, whereas in the West, in a tradition which may now have different connotations from its first use, a bride wears white. With regard to status, in the armed forces for example, in a uniform such as in the navy, when one looks at the number of rings on the sleeve or braid on the collar of an officer's suit, one not only learns the person's occupation but also the rank that he has attained.

Clothes and other forms of decoration do more than just indicate a person's sex, age, occupation and position in a social hierarchy: they are also associated with a complex of sentiments and serve to channel strong emotions. Like other symbols, clothes have a cognitive aspect - they move men to act in prescribed ways. It would be wrong to expect the Queen to wear a crown or a bishop a mitre, except as part of specified duties or ceremonies. Henri Lhote (1955) in his work on the veil of the Tuareg shows the way in which clothing communicates emotional as well as social details. The style of wearing the veil - wearing it on different parts of the head - may vary from tribe to tribe, and some individuals even change their style according to personal taste. Similarly there is the psychology of the veil; by the way in which it is set, one can imagine the mood of the wearer:

The veil may also express a transient sentiment. For example, it is brought up to the eyes before women or prestigious persons, while it is a sign of familiarity when it is lowered. To laugh from delight with a joke, the Tuareg will lift up the lower part of his veil very high on his nose, and, in case of irritation, will tighten it like a chin strap to conceal his anger (Lhote 1955: 308-309, translated and quoted by Robert Murphy 1964:1266).

More recent theorists have looked at dress and fashion as communication. Fred Davis (1992) suggests that fashion can be thought of like language. Even before this Alison Lurie (1981) had suggested that fashion has a grammar and vocabulary resembling those of spoken languages. Ronald Schwarz says that 'this aspect of clothing, its ability to express (and conceal) certain principles and emotions, and to move people to act in a culturally appropriate manner, may be called its 'symbolic or rhetorical power' (1979:29). Through their capacity to symbolize a social order, what is and what should be, clothes are related to social action and communication in a dynamic way.

The philosopher Justus Buchler (1955) points out that what humans produce, be it a spear, a house, or a pair of shoes, reflects the choices made within an environment only partially produced by that particular person and with which that person interacts. Following Buchler's work we may distinguish three modes of human production; doing, making and saying; and consider them as alternative ways in which an individual establishes his relationship to the world. The mode of production, which characterizes objects of material culture is 'making.' How a person orders his or her materials, no less than what he or she says about them, or describes them to be, reflects the direction of the self and defines the character of one's world. The properties of things are defined by being brought into relation with us. This is accomplished not only by saying something about them, but by doing something to them and/or making something out of them (Buchler 1955:12-13) 'It is not the mind that judges, it is the man' (1955:29).

Modes of judgement, according to Buchler, are also modes of communication. We communicate by acting and making as well as by stating. Furthermore, the communicative aspect of what we produce is not limited to the meanings stated by those who make the judgements.

One of the earliest systematic studies on clothing was carried out done by Jane Richardson and Alfred Kroeber (1940) on changing of style in women's dress. They suggested that modes and styles of clothing reflect social conditions and are affected by the flow of events. Claude Lévi-Strauss used their findings as evidence for the operation of laws underlying phenomena, which might be superficially judged as arbitrary. He asserts that:

These laws cannot be reached by purely empirical observation, or by intuitive consideration of the phenomena, but result from measuring some basic relationships between various elements of costume (1963:58)

According to Schwarz (1979), analysing clothing at this level takes on the same character as a problem in structural linguistics and the natural sciences. The empirical problem is to identify the basic components, patterns and systems of relationships (communicative systems) taken individually and as clusters or groups. The issue is not simply whether clothing and adornment may be studied by methods and concepts similar to those used in linguistics, but, as Levi-Strauss phrases it, 'whether they do not constitute phenomena whose inmost nature is the same as that of language' (1963: 61).

Peter Bogatyrev suggests that 'the function of a costume is an expression of the attitudes of the wearers' (1971:93). He postulates that in order to grasp the functions of costume we must learn to read them as signs in the same way as we learn to read and understand language. He notes that:

A costume is like a microcosm where one finds mirrored in their relative intensities the aesthetic, moral and nationalistic ideals of those who wear it. In order to fully comprehend the role of costume as an expression of folk ethics, we must have recognised the ethical ideals reflected in a costume's form (in such things as the restrictions as to who may wear it) and we must have knowledge of the general ethical ideals of the people as well. Otherwise we might miss or fail to understand certain expressions of such ideals in the functions of the costume (1971: 93).

In her article 'Fabricating the Female Body' (1990) Jane Gaines looks at feminist theory and costume practice in relation to a moral stance, an attitude which was strong at the beginning of the second wave of feminist politics and scholarship, but which has gradually eased into a less proscriptive position. Following the contours of Simone de Beauvoir's thought about women and contemporary fashion, this position was based on two recurring charges against the culture of femininity. First, fashion is enslavement; women are bound by the drudgery of keeping up their appearance and by the impediments of the styles, which prohibit them from acting in the world. Second, costume may disguise the body, deform it, or follow its curves; but ultimately 'puts it on display' (de Beauvoir, 1953:529).

These considerations – clothing as protection against the elements, as a means of either concealing the shameful or drawing attention to the enticing, as bait in the

'sexual market place', as a focus of attention or an indication of status, as a channel for the emotions and the expression of moods or a means of expressing solidarity with others - are all at least marginally pertinent when we study competitive ballroom dancing, even though their relevance may not be always immediately evident.

As mentioned earlier, there are in CBD two distinctly grouped styles, respectively the Ballroom and Latin ballroom styles, in which dance couples specialize. The Ballroom style comprises those dances associated with the ballroom. In this style men move as regally as they can while wearing a set of tails, waistcoat, bow tie and stiff collar. (Originally this would have been starched, and get progressively limper as the evening advanced. Nowadays, more sensibly, it is usually made of plastic or of a plastic-like material.) While male dancers can express various degrees of pleasure during the performance, their carriage is consistently upright and steadfast. This stoicism, John Reynolds (1998) suggests, is in imitation of a form of military discipline reminiscent of that of cavalry officers when they were drawn from men 'of good breeding', which meant that they were as well-versed in social graces as in battle.

For this style of dancing women wear gowns designed to emphasize and exaggerate each motion. They frame their faces with sparkling jewels and embellish their features with heavy application of stage cosmetics. They wear high, narrow-heeled sandal-type shoes, which are often quite uncomfortable and cause the majority of accidents on the dance floor. Their facial expressions contrast markedly with those of their partners. They smile with purely artificial delight and all the time they appear spontaneous and effortless, even while ankles creak in protest, calves become cramped and shoes pinch their toes.

For the Latin style of dance, men have less need to vary their outfits, though these are often such as would be looked at somewhat askance as ordinary daytime wear. Hip-hugging trousers, usually black, serve well for all dances, with blouses or blouson type tops, in a variety of colours. The women in Latin dances wear short, revealing clothes. In Latin dancing courtship remains the language, but the message is often pure lust. It was said by some of my informants that those seeing these dances for the first time are often stunned by the unbridled energy, athletic prowess and open eroticism of the dancers. Their costumes underscore their passion. In 1959 when dancers started competing in the Latin style, they too wore tails, but the overhead movement felt restricted by the dinner jacket, and in order to avoid this Wally Laird wore a bolero jacket for Latin dancing; some years later Alan Fletcher, a

leader of male dance fashion, discarded the jacket in favour of the open neck shirt, much to the chagrin of some members of the Officials of the Dancing Board (Harry Smith-Hampshire (2001). Men now choose blouse-type shirts, unbuttoned to display rippling pectoral muscles, and trousers that flatten the stomach while sculpting the buttocks. The costumes worn by the women who perform Latin dancing are skimpy and clinging. They can be as imaginative and provocative as modesty and social standards permit. Their clothes draw attention to the to the sensuality of the movements as well as to the dancers' taut and physical physiques (John Reynolds, 1988).

The evolution of 'the Look'

In the matter of the construction of 'the Look' dancers have been strongly influenced by the changing dress fashions of the past eighty or so years. This would have had little, if any, effect on the actual form and structure of the dances: a waltz is always a waltz, a tango changes in response to other forces than those which govern dress: but the concerted processes of fashion are responsible for gradual alterations in the total Look of those who feature on the floor in CBD, and this forms a conspicuous part of the competitive aspect. Any notable deviation by competitive ballroom dancers from what would be regarded as right and becoming for its period would be likely to be viewed adversely by the spectators and contribute negatively to the decisions of the judges.

With this in mind I have thought it rewarding, and more than marginally contributory to the theme of the present work, to trace the course of those changes in the Look, mainly to do with dress and the other aspects of adornment, which have led to what it has become today. With this in mind I have conducted a survey of the varying nature of 'the Look' during the years when CBD has been developing, consulting mainly some of the most respected authors who have written on fashion, such as James Laver (1995), Ernestine Carter (1975), Alan Mansfield and Phillis Cunnington (1952 and 1973) , as well as Elizabeth Ewing (1987), starting from the 1920s, when Competitive Ballroom Dancing as we know it began. For those who wore evening clothes and dressed up to dance certain patterns or adornment styles were emerging during the decades celebrated by those writers.

In order to illustrate the ways in which the 'Look' evolved with regard to CBD, the decades of fashion have been described first and then the ways on which they relate to CBD are examined.

The 1920s

In the twenties there was a desire to forget the late war. Dancing was very popular, drugs became fashionable, and the attainment of sophistication was the aim of many young men and women. From America came cocktails and cocaine. Both there and in Europe girls took to smoking cigarettes. In other words the 'flappers' as they were called, the Bright Young Things of the best-selling novels of Evelyn Waugh and Michael Arlen among others, took over the popular scene. Dixieland jazz, followed by the Blues, accelerated the dancing passion. Ernestine Carter (1975) claims that the short skirt, which spelled the doom of the statuesque beauty, 'was ousted by the skinny little flapper.' This was popularly put down to the influence of jazz.

But even before the Charleston, lifted skirts and hemlines had already betrayed the general post-war confusion, going feverishly up and down. The waist meantime had dropped to the hips with the bosom flattened out of existence, and the widest part of even the slimmest female figure was mercilessly accentuated. Hair was shingled at the back, and brought over the cheek in what were facetiously called 'kiss curls'. By then many women had given up the previously fashionable Marcel wave for the finger wave and/or the permanent wave. Eyebrows were plucked in such a way that the women looked as though they were in a permanent state of astonishment. Cupid's bow mouths were outlined in bright red lipstick. Nails were red too, after the first coloured nail varnish was produced. Elinor Glyn invented the 'It' girl and Clara Bow was its film incarnation (Carter 1975). The simple shifts of the Jazz Age were hung with a mass of jewellery, real or imitation; there were long and many strings of pearls, dangling ear-rings, diamond clips, brooches, diamond bracelets and so forth. The influence of Coco Chanel, the typical designer of the twenties, lasted until her death.

Beneath the jazzed-up façade of the era were all kinds of social and moral tensions. While the term 'The New Poor' was being heard ever more frequently in Europe, upper class society continued to operate according to the pre-war social calendar. It was on the basis of this pattern of events that the top section of the fashion industry was being constructed. Social convention demanded that clothes be appropriate for the time of day, the activity, or the formality of the occasion.

During the 1920s the *haute couture* business continued to flourish, employing, at its peak, over 250,000 workers in Paris alone, up until the Wall Street crash in 1929.

Haute couture was expensive and exclusive because the clothes were built up and fashioned on live models and made especially to order. It was difficult to stop 'pirating' of diluted and minimally changed forms for large-scale manufacture. Although mass production of clothing made the latest fashion accessible there was still a big difference between *haute couture* and ready-made clothes. Mass production necessitated some uniformity, which led to a new rational sizing system. In addition, as Jacqueline Herald (1991:5) claimed, it also sorted customers into more clearly defined types according to their income bracket.

Throughout the 1920s the well-established fashion houses had created evening garments, which were heavily embroidered and constructed from beautiful fabrics. However Chanel, Madeleine Vionnet and Elsa Schiaparelli broke new grounds. Vionnet's inventive clothes were cut on the bias from shoulders and hips and, using heavy satin and crêpe, were fluid and perfectly sculptured. This went on to become the clinging line of the 1930s. It was possible simply to step into one of the low-backed evening dresses, with no hooks, ties or fastenings. Schiaparelli led the field in creating colourful accessories, and Lanvin opened the first boutique for men in Paris (Herald 1991). In Britain the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) stood out as a male ideal. He was considered the leader of men's fashion and was regularly featured in *Vanity Fair's* column on 'The Well Dressed Man'.

The 1930s

The most enduring images of the 1930s, the decade of the Great Depression, are those of despair, vividly depicted in John Baxter's film *Love on the Dole* (1941), based on the novel by Walter Greenwood, with mass unemployment, breadlines and the dole, the rise of fascism and the drift towards World War II. With these images in mind it is easy to forget that fashion, beauty and glamour were still important aspects of everyday life for many people. As the rich were tightening their belts, spending less and making economies where they could, designers responded by cutting their prices and producing new lines of ready-to-wear clothes, to make up for the shortfall in *haute couture*. This was done, by producing more practical clothes made of economical and washable fabrics. For example Chanel showed a collection of evening wear which helped to promote cotton as a fashion fabric. New fabrics were developed, such as rayon, known as artificial silk, and nylon production had begun, in addition to a whole host of pre-shrunk fabrics.

While the rich still looked to Paris for their fashions America was beginning to encroach on the wider aspects of fashion. Maria Costantino (1991:12), claimed that 'working women all over the world and even couturiers themselves kept an eye on the movies'. Not only did women copy the dress style of the stars but also their hairstyles. It was also thanks to Hollywood that the cosmetic industry began to introduce a larger range of products at more modest prices and started to evolve into the influential large-scale factor in fashion that it is today. In women's magazines and the popular press there appeared step-by-step guides to 'transforming yourself from the girl next door to glamour girl', with the help of face make-up, eye shadow, pencils, mascara and the very essential lipstick (Constantino 1991).

The new woman of the 30s was a very different shape to the one of the 20s. Gone were the flat chests and the boyish look. Bosoms re-appeared, waists were back in their normal place and shoulders began to broaden, often with the aid of pads, eventually reaching exaggerated proportions in costumes with sleeves large and puffed to show off a small waist. Curves returned, skirts were draped over the hips. But the biggest innovation was the backless evening gown, halter-necked, bias-cut, and shaped to the wearer's body. Costume jewellery was often placed on either side of the neckline of the evening dress and when pulled down formed a diamond or heart shape, which became known as the 'sweetheart line'.

Fashion designers also responded to current trends in art such as the Surrealist movement and Art Deco. Salvador Dali collaborated with Schiaparelli, and Art Deco themes embodying geometry and coming from the Cubist movement were also featured in clothes worn by such fashionable beauties as Greta Garbo.

Despite failing economies people could escape from the blackness of everyday life by going to the theatre and also by dancing. Whereas the Charleston and Black Bottom were the dances of the 20s, by the 30s everyone had to be able to swing. The music of the Gershwins, Cole Porter and their like had become the rage. The Lindy Hop dance was very popular, and for the more restrained there was dancing to the big bands. Latin American rhythms like the rumba were ideal for drawing attention to the flowing lines of the draped, bias-cut dress. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were very popular, and the latter herself designed many of the lavish gowns that she wore on the screen. Clothes for men on the whole remained quite dull throughout this decade and there were very few changes from the 20s.

Throughout this decade, as during the previous two, social dancing was practiced mainly by couples who dressed as fashion and their purses permitted, though afternoon tea-dances tended to attract a clientele in everyday rather than evening wear, and the competitors in CBD aimed, as they still do, at attracting by their attire as well as their performances. During the Depression, however, there emerged in the United States a form of dance competition, which aimed specifically at exploiting the indigent for the entertainment mainly of the only slightly more affluent. These were the so-called Dance Marathons of the 1930s, portrayed in their full horror in Sidney Pollack's (1969) film from Horace McCoy's novel *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* These competitions lasted non-stop for six days, and the winners were those who carried on until the end, in exchange for a smallish monetary reward. Though among the dances practised were some similar to those in the ballroom, and the competitive element dominated even more strongly than it does in CBD, they deserve only a passing and condemnatory mention in the present context.

The 1940s

Fashion, understandably enough, did not go on grabbing the headlines in the newspapers of the 1940s, when the world had gone to war. In Britain clothes rationing started in June 1941. Dresses were standardized, but by using top designers the clothes could be made to look more attractive. Patricia Baker (1991a: 10) suggests 'that it also meant that some women became better dressed as a result of wartime restrictions.' Many nonetheless carried on as best they might with ballroom dresses acquired before the war. Men on the dance-floor were in uniform as often as not, though many strove to maintain in ageing suits the smartness they had shown in the period before the war.

Fashions came into their own again in the USA quite soon after war ended, whereas Paris, the home of *haute couture*, had had its problems in the fashion industry because of rumours of collaboration with the Nazis. The American designers brought out dresses showing great luxury and femininity, with full skirts and narrow waists. These were to be the precursors of what would be known as the 'New Look', which was introduced with the debut of Christian Dior in 1947. Dior designed dresses which used a great deal of material and accentuated the bust, the waist, the hips and the ankles. For evening-wear the look was created by using wasp-waist corsets, hip pads and shoulder pads to underpin it. Christobal Balenciaga, a Spanish designer, opened a salon in Paris and also became influential in the creation and establishment of fashion.

In France the couturiers were subsidized by the government and seemed to swim in their freedom like bright tropical fish. The clothes they designed and created tended to be beautiful, dramatic and sumptuous rather than elegant. In England, The Society of London Fashion Designers reassembled itself and as the forties eased into the fifties joined the French designers in reaching for quality.

The 1950s

There was no obvious change of direction on the fashion front to mark the start of the 1950s. Rationing and austerity continued in the UK into the new decade. The world was, however, changing. The Second World War had brought about the end of European Colonial empires. Although the war was over the American and British governments were becoming increasingly apprehensive about the possible use against them of the nuclear bomb. The realisation of what this might mean prompted a cynicism among the young, which was to be the hallmark of the 1960s. There was the Korean War from 1950-53, the space race had started and what was known as the 'Cold War' between the Western Allies and the so-called 'Iron Curtain' countries, the USSR and China and the countries under their influence, was under way.

In the media the accent was on the situation in the home; that was where the woman of the 50s was expected to be. Fashion, Baker states (1991b), was based on Dior's 'New Look' of the 40s, promoting an idealized image of a happy housewife. The media constantly used such adjectives as 'soft', 'charming', 'feminine', to describe the clothing, a sort of 'living doll' image. Yet most depictions of fashion showed tall, slender, heavily corseted models holding themselves in highly artificial, ballet-like poses, with little sign of emotion. For many this reflected the ideal rather than the real, and indeed it was far from reality. Meanwhile the fantasy of television, not yet in colour, was beginning to add a new dimension to dress. It often showed what women were actually wearing, and what could be found already in a good many homes by now, providing an alternative not only more attractive but perhaps more reachable. The influence of the cinema was waning and that of what could actually be brought into sight in the home was taking its place, especially when actors already familiar on the large screen could be virtually domesticated by the small screen.

In this world the ideal was that the woman stayed at home during the day, and then when her husband came home from work they went out together. For evening wear halter necks and strapless dresses with tight bodices were in vogue. Female curves

were seen as all-important for attracting and keeping the desirable male. To achieve this look the body often had to be squeezed into stiffly boned corsetry. The final part of this armour was the stiletto heel, high and pointed. Nylon stockings were now cheaper and better. After the lifting of post-war restrictions there was a further explosion in the use of cosmetics. Cheeks were gently rouged, eyes were emphasized by liquid eyeliners, a little eye shadow and masses of mascara. However, it was the lips, women were told, that trapped the man, and most of the lipsticks had names which implied cool seduction (but of course into marriage).

A man's ideal fashion was seen as that of 'The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit'. He did not have to be fashionable, that was for the female. As the dependable breadwinner, his style of dress reflected the image of a clean-cut white-collar company man, sober, mature and anonymous. Lounge suits were now acceptable for many social occasions provided the trousers had knife-edge creases, and shirt cuffs were just visible under the coat cuffs. If evening suits were worn, it was now with a standard white starched collared shirt, black bow tie, dinner jacket, often with satin lapels and matching black trousers.

Not everyone in the 50s wanted to be associated with the grey flannel suit or living doll image. The non-conformists of the 50s were the Beatniks. Many people thought this name meant 'off beat', or out of step, but Jack Kerouac, (1957) one of their leaders, claimed that the name was basically a religious one, signifying beatitude. There were similarities in this group to the post-war existentialist movement in France and elsewhere, when students and intellectuals met and talked about Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Disquiet over established values was reflected in dress. The message was anti-fashion and anti-establishment. The focal points for meeting were coffee-houses where one could just hang out, lingering over a cup of *cappuccino* or *espresso*. Many US film heroes at this time, such as Marlon Brando and James Dean, and the Teddy Boys in the UK, attempted to portray such anti-establishment ideals.

Paris still remained the centre of fashion, of *haute couture*, although Florence and Rome were soon to follow. Theirs were the trends favoured by the fashionable everywhere, and followed as closely as possible by the competitors in CBD. Male formal dress continued virtually unchanged and proved acceptable on the dance-floor. Perhaps the greatest change in fashion for both men and women was in hair styling, though in CBD men tended not to favour the extremes. The first innovation

for women was the hair roller, lifting the hair to provide a frame for the face; this lift was sustained by strenuous back-combing. The second was the hairspray, which lacquered the lift into place. The third was when Givenchy chose, in 1958, to put mannequins into wigs for the catwalk.

The 1960s

The 1960s were a great time to be young. Youth culture and youth fashion blossomed as never before. Extra cash in young people's pockets meant extra freedom, freedom for injecting creative and provocative ideas. The world appeared to be getting smaller and people started to talk of the global village. Popular music went through enormous changes too, it even began to be taken seriously as an art form. The Beatles had an unbroken string of hits and their clothes and hairstyles became a familiar symbol of the new culture.

Since in the 50s *haute couture* was largely the preserve of the wealthy in the 1960s the increasing prosperity of young people meant that fashion was gradually edged towards taking them more seriously. A more youthful approach was inaugurated by such designers as Yves St. Laurent. Youth was on the way to becoming a cult, and as the original Beatniks aged their culture persisted as a young one. However, though by 1963 youth groups such as the 'Mods and Rockers', who had been prominent earlier, had started to fade, the style and fashion of 'the Mods' remained. Mary Quant was one of the English designers to take advantage of their ideas. In the USA, beach boys' and girls' fashion took their place: easy and casual dresses and outfits suitable for the Californian sunshine.

Prominent figures came once more into the foreground in fashion, and political wives were losing their image of dowdiness. Jacqueline Kennedy, who after the presidential election of 1960 was now the new First Lady in the US, became a notable 'model' and trend-setter. Bouffant hairstyles were still going strong in the 60s, but hair was now more often back-combed, and there were many women also wearing hair-pieces. A number of teen-aged girls still wore clothes like their mothers, or copied newly glamorous film stars like Doris Day.

Men's styles at this time were strongly influenced by Italian designers. Formality was the keynote, with single-breasted suits, short jackets, narrow lapels, narrow collared shirts, and slender ties. Trousers were narrower and men wore pointed 'winkle-

picker' shoes. Hair was worn longer and facial hair was becoming more acceptable, though it was not favoured in CBD.

Mary Quant played a key role in the launch of the mini-skirt, which she blended with geometric black and white Pop-art patterns. The mini was most effective when worn by the young. Yvonne Connikie (1990:15) claims that 'everywhere old ideas about fashion were being turned upside down', though even at that time such extremes were out of place in CBD. The obligation to follow the fashion at all costs was beginning to wane, and nowhere was this more obvious than in the conservatism of the preferred attire in CBD when compared with the fashions becoming current in the less restrained styles of social dancing. For evening- wear it was the so-called 'ethnic' look that was becoming popular. This wildly inaccurate term was used to cover almost every style which had not had its origin among persons of western European descent, and even a few which had, provided they were colourful and plebeian. For example, Pierre Cardin chose the Far East for inspiration in a sequined ankle-length silk dress, while other Parisian designers transformed hippies' cheap flamboyant clothes, often purchased economically in the markets of Africa and Asia, or even, daringly, behind the Iron Curtain, into expensive designer wear (Connikie 1990). Ready-to-wear clothes of 1967 featured 'harem' dresses, tent dresses, Rajah coats, Nehru jackets in fine wool, and exotic though often crudely woven silks. The caftan featured as an especially popular 'ethnic' garment, worn by both men and women. Black became recognised as beautiful, and white and black youths adopted 'Afro' hairstyles. Hashish or hemp, the traditional indulgence of many of the poor, especially Africans and Asians, became fashionable and was nicknamed 'Pot'. Out of the Pot era blossomed the 'Flower People', the new-style hippies with a new uniform of trailing dresses and bodices in contrasting patterns. Men also wore jewellery, usually over loose billowy shirts and velvet trousers with wide bottoms. The new look for men was soft and feminine even though the hippie writings exalted masculinity of a sort.

By 1969 there seemed to be no hard and fast rule any more. Anti-fashion had triumphed in a roundabout way, and nothing would ever be quite the same. Television and the vogue for old films nevertheless plunged fashion into a seemingly endless bout of nostalgia. In England Mary Quant was still one of the leading fashion designers; Jean Muir was a contemporary classicist, as were several others, and some dazzling debuts were made with daring forays into fantasy. Boutiques and discothèques sprouted everywhere, dark and with loud and canned music. Carnaby

Street, the Kings Road and Biba became and even up to today have remained tourist attractions, though they have never become the model for competitive ballroom dancers. The rift between *haute* and *basse couture* widened in dress even as it became less obvious at a purely social level, with CBD affiliating itself firmly with the former.

The 1970s

The writer Tom Wolfe dubbed the seventies the 'Me Decade', meaning that it was characterized by selfishness and acquisitiveness. It was taken almost for granted that political extremists and fundamentalist groups should commit acts of terrorism. In terms of dress fashions (Jacqueline Herald 1992:5) asserts that magazines were claiming that 'anything goes: there are no rules any more'. Fashion continued to try to exploit the wave of nostalgia and the way the search for the look was taking designs and ideas from ethnic dress, but these styles were no escape from real social, political and environmental upheaval. The energy crisis, increasing unemployment, world recession, as well as the upsurge of movements such as gay liberation, women's rights and anti-nuclear strategies, were now often quite violent, and were all reflected in the way people dressed.

The idea of dress as a system of signs indicating lifestyles and the aspirations of the wearer was taken very seriously in the 1970s. This developed along with the discipline known as semiotics, the largely linguistic study of signs and symbols. Writings by Roland Barthes, the French semiotician became required reading in many art colleges that prioritized theory over practice. (The Italian semiotician and novelist Umberto Eco wrote wittily about the relationship between the internal experience and the external appearance of wearing blue jeans in a 1976 essay entitled 'Lumbar Thoughts.')

By 1975 the world was in recession. As job prospects dwindled a network of street markets developed in Britain for the sale of second-hand clothes. With attention being increasingly paid to designer labels in clothes, and especially gowns, men and woman alike were economising and investing in good quality classics. Some of the famous ready-to-wear designers succeeded in producing simple, timeless shapes inspired by classical drapery, which were nevertheless extremely difficult to imitate. Naturally the key to distinction was the quality and fibre of the clothes; this justified the expense of even the simplest cut of top designer creations.

French *haute couture* too was by now on the wane. In London Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies were the two dressmakers to the Queen, but many ready-to wear-designers established themselves and acquired their own spheres of influence. Thea Porter created clothes of an ethnic nature, and Laura Ashley's milkmaid dresses and Zandra Rhodes's fantasy dresses were in evidence, though at this stage many women took refuge in trousers for day and evening wear.

The 1980s

With the royal engagement in 1980 romance was very much in the air. The ensuing wedding was televised all over the world, and came up to expectation with the bride's fairy-tale wedding dress, which was copied everywhere. Notwithstanding this the romantic mood was soon overtaken by the well-tailored executive look, which was quickly dubbed that of the 'yuppie', that is, the look of the young upwardly mobile professional person. This was not only a fashion but also a social trend; the women of this group were said to have the spirit of hard work and independent responsibility. A new decade was ushered in, when it became fashionable to make money and to dress well. During the day the women's clothes tended to be based on the male silhouette. Glamour was kept for the evenings with the increasing popularity of such gatherings as charity balls, bringing with them an appropriate resurgence of formal dress and a re-approximation in at least one segment of social life to what was still deemed suitable for CBD.

Vicky Carnegie states that in the 1980s 'you had to be fit' (1990:48). Aerobic and dance studios sprang up like mushrooms. Exercise books and video cassettes were sold by the thousands, for those too shy to 'work out' in public. Once you had the shape you needed the right clothes to show it off. Brenda Polan (1983), talking about evening wear in the 1980s, said that according to the top designers of the time ultra-sophisticated designs with lots of sheaths and long sleeves in slipper satin showed more than a touch of Hollywood. An article in Polan's book (1983: 173) looked at the Paris scene. She saw plain fabrics providing the glamour, with such garments as those in pale grey satin, or the slim column effect, with a gently swathed bust on white crepe, named the Grecian look. Those dresses are the ones 'which stay in the memory of fashion watchers and which people recall with pleasure, even years later' (1983:173).

The 1990s

During the 1990s a new Europe came into being. The European Economic Community was in place, where many of the European Countries had a common currency and economic policy and shared a set of laws. Also the Channel Tunnel joining the British Isles to mainland Europe was completed at this time. As the world shrank, fashions criss-crossed international boundaries. Anne-Marie Schiro wrote in the *New York Times* in 1992, 'the latest buzz- word for fashions isn't mini or maxi, or stretch. It's globalization.' Calvin Klein told her in an interview that 'Europe wants American clothes and America needs Europe'. With regard to evening wear in the 1990s a more personalised expression of clothing for 'dressing up in' took hold. In addition to classic short and long dresses, elegantly tailored suits began to be worn. These evening suits were fashioned in rich fabrics with lush details and were very popular, Festive bejewelled evening sweater outfits were demonstrated and were usually paired with long skirts or evening slacks.

Silhouettes, including body-fitting and slim skirts in long and short lengths, as well as loose and fluid floating styles, came into vogue. Many ultra -full skirts were buttressed by petticoats. Fabrics ranged from shiny satins, plush velvets, slinky metallic-hued lamés, to laces of many types as well as solid and patterned silks and airy chiffons. Embellishments were particularly popular. Dresses, evening suits and gowns were studied with jewels, rhinestones, pearls, beads, sequins and so on. Other decorative details ranged from fur and feather trimmings to braids of gilt cord. Women also wore giant 'chandelier' earrings. Fake or faux jewellery was seen, even in wealthier women mindful of the realities of crime: masses of pearls in necklaces, row upon row of glittering chains and wide bangle bracelets.

For the men throughout this decade, as in earlier decades, there was little variation. At special evening occasions a man would be familiarly attired in his standard black dinner jacket and trousers, with black bow tie, cummerbund, white shirt and gleaming black patent-leather shoes.

The first decade of the 21st Century

A number of authorities on fashion have pointed out that fashion has changed. Alexandra Shulman, the editor of *Vogue*, comments in the *Daily Telegraph* (24th January 2005) that:

Today, when there are more and more trends in fashion, they necessarily

become somewhat diluted. Whereas once everybody would wear the mini if they wanted to be fashionable, now hemlines can be full –length, mini or knee length...When people ask me what the season's trends are, it seems to be getting harder and harder to say anything that will neatly encapsulate what you ought to buy. But on the upside, it means that there is always a trend for everyone.

Fashion and the evolution of 'the Look' in the world of competitive ballroom dancing

One would expect the changing fashions over the decades to have had an impact on what dancers wore and, in general, this appears to have been the case with non-competitive social dancing. What happened in the case of CBD proves more difficult to determine, though it would be reasonable to assume that what the judges and onlookers would find most to their taste would be whatever was acceptable in social circles where dancing was taken seriously. This would have added to it ornamentation intended specifically to catch the eye and secure the approval of the judges. Had anything particularly unexpected or unfamiliar occurred in connection with any of the major competitions, it could be expected to have been recorded in the annals of the dance world, but no such evidence was available, even from the veterans of the dance world whom I was able to interview in Blackpool and elsewhere.

In order to obtain more information about the effect of changes in fashion on 'the Look' in CBD I first sought archival material or photographs on dance, but none was available. In an article in the *Dance News* of the 1st August 2002 Smith-Hampshire noted that a Committee for Artistic Standards and Excellence (CASE) had just been formed; among its aims was to establish an official central archive of Ballroom Dancing which would be available to any interested party. Mrs Hazel Fletcher, who has been researching this topic for the Dancescape TV website, told me that she had borrowed old photographs from several champions to illustrate her presentation but had now sent them back. She commented, however, that with regard to fashions the dance world did borrow ideas from the evening wear of the general public. It had also been known for ball gowns to be copied for the general public from the styles of competitive ballroom dancing. In a video representation of the History of Dance Fashion at the Dancescape TV website there are some photographs of ballroom dance styles. One of the women featured is Phyllis Haylor, who wore what was seen as a very feminine tiered-style dance dress made of chiffon and whose hair was arranged in finger waves, which was said to be typical of the styles of the twenties and thirties. Daye Allen, another well-known dancer, wore a chiffon dress moulded to

the shape of the body to the hip line, which was very streamlined when static, but flared from the hips when the dancer was in motion. She had a shoulder drape, and this was a notion which would reappear later in dance dresses.

During the Second World War the stylish dance competitions had more or less stopped; but, following the war, because chiffon was in short supply and there still remained clothes rationing, rayon net became popular with dancers. The problem with this was that it became terribly creased and women had to carry their travelling irons with them. Dresses also became shorter in the fifties. This was seen as a time of freer movements without the fear of men treading on the women's dresses. According to Fletcher this was also the time when movements became more aggressive, such as in the Tango.

Top skirts, such as those worn on top of full petticoats and worn by Sally Brock, were embroidered by the same company as that used by Norman Hartnell, the Queen's couturier. The name 'Ballgown' became synonymous with high fashion. Dance competitions at this time, were watched by many women, either in the ballroom or on television, and often they had their special evening gown based on an idea of a ballroom dress. There also began to be more of a feedback of dance procedures which influenced the changes in the dress. For example this was a time when the hold in the dance had become more open, and this influenced the choice of materials and design.

Women started to experiment with varying lengths of nylon net, now favoured, as it did not crease. These dresses became fuller and came to be known as 'Powder Puffs' or rather unflatteringly the 'Lampshade Style'. Some dancers, such as Doreen Freeman, who was considered an excellent dancer, wore shoes with four-inch high heels with many stones on them, to draw attention to her footwork. This fashion did not remain for long, as perhaps not many women were quite so confident of their footwork or comfortable about dancing in such high heels.

In the late fifties Brenda Winslade dresses showed the striking use of embroidery, which could be made of variation in designs, especially in the way the decoration was continued on to the gloves. Shoestring straps were now very popular and hairstyles had become natural-looking. Styles of dress decorated with one theme from neck to hem, and also the rather exaggerated use of boning, was used to enhance the ladies' bust line.

In the early sixties the hairstyles of many of the dancers became bouffant. The cut of the net in the dress altered its shape during this period, and the bodices became intensely adorned with thousands of tiny beads, pearls and sequins. This meant hours of work for the dressmaker and led to part of the mythical idea of what competitive ballroom dancing was about in the minds of those for those who knew about, but did not really follow, this activity. During this period a greater sense of sway in the dance was evolving. Now that more of the ladies' legs were visible, choreography was also developed to show more fancy and varied foot patterns, such as high kicks and other improvised movements.

During the seventies the introduction of a range of colours in feathers, twinkle chiffon, nylon net and sequins made a novel and striking contribution to 'the Look'. The nylon net used until then had proved something of a hindrance to the movements of the man, but now it was only 30 denier, slightly softer, thereby allowing him to move with more ease, particularly when bringing his right leg forward. In the eighties women started experimenting with long chiffon dresses for demonstrations. In 1982 the first long dress for a long time with no net was used in competitions (Hazel Fletcher). This really started the present trend. At the 1983 UK championships, half the finalists were in long dresses, and today most of the ballroom dancers still have long dresses, which are ankle rather than floor length in order that the dancers' footwork be seen.

It took another eighteen months before all followed suit. During this time feathers became a feature of the dress, they were grouped and glued on to the hem of the dress. With no restriction of yards of stiff net in the way, there was freedom for greater swing. New fabrics swirled so well that the choreography was able to become so much more rotational. Many competitions for several years featured virtually every woman using the same shaped skirt with approximately twelve metres of feather.

In the late eighties floaters and big drapes became popular and eventually normal. Shoulder adornments enhanced the top line, especially for women of slight physique, enabling them to match the man's wider hold. Karen Hilton, the world champion dancer, had a dress with a big skirt and big drapes, which had a significant impact on the dancing world (Hazel Fletcher 2001). The spiral cut of the shoulder dress was said to be stunning in its simplicity and was only possible with the introduction of materials that could stretch without confining. Another of Karen Hilton's dresses was multi-rhinestoned. This dress had more than 17,000 rhinestones, so many that it was

said that there was no space for more. Rhinestones still remain a feature of present day dance gowns. Though these do add somewhat to the weight of the dress, this does not appear appreciably to affect movement as Karen and Marcus Hilton were famed for their very fast quickstep.

For the men there have hardly been any changes in the accepted clothes for Ballroom dancing since 1929 when after a competition it was decided that a tail suit and white waistcoat was the best garment, modifications were made in 1950 with very square shoulders, wasp waists and billowy trousers for better movement. Then in 1980 from Japan there was a new development in the shoulder and sleeve cutting, forming a tube sleeve which makes the shoulder and sleeve look all-in-one (Smith-Hampshire 2001) There have been other attempts to change: for example Andrew Sinkinson decided to wear a waistcoat rather than full evening wear as it was a morning competition. Many people criticised this and felt that he was not appropriately dressed for the occasion (Bryn Allen 1998).

In 2002, a dancer wore a tail suit with a dark brown jacket and light brown trousers, which matched his partner's outfit. Bryn Allen, one of the top judges and ballroom dance experts rather liked it, but he commented in his column in *Dancing News* that he noted for the final round of the competition the dancer changed back to the more conventional tails because he feared that the die-hard traditionalists might show their objection in the markings (Allen, 2002).

'The Look' on the dance floor

In competitive ballroom dancing 'the Look', made up as it is of a number of the not necessarily interdependent factors mentioned earlier, cannot be considered from the standpoint of the appearance alone; it also involves an element akin to allure, though perhaps not expressed as such. The dancer seeks to become the object of attention of the judges on the edge of the ballroom floor, as well as of the audiences nearby. It is not enough to move in perfect time to the music, or to have an excellent dance technique. While it is true that good dancers can captivate an audience, a proper costume goes a long way towards improving the visual effect and the dancer's confidence and movements. One of my Oxford informants, a very good dancer, even suggested, sadly, that as far as he was concerned, some dancers won competitions thanks to how they looked rather than by their competence and comportment in the dance.

Since the appearance of the dancer is acknowledged to be very important in competitions, this chapter will deal also with how the Look is achieved today, that is, with its actual fabrication. Determining and analysing this comprised an important section of my fieldwork. There are several levels of competition, and, associated with these, different codes of dress are expected or required. When dancers start competing the female dancers will often wear clothes bought from retail shops, which they feel will look appropriate for competitions. The one necessary item of clothing for all dancers are the special dance shoes, which at the lower end of the range can cost from £30-£35 per pair. Often the dance competitions are held in badly lit halls where the dancers feel that it is most important to wear additional makeup in order to attract the judges and appeal to the audiences. When one is a beginner they will probably go for the cheapest they can buy, but as they progress up the ladder this will have to change.

The members of the Oxford Sports Dance team bought and made clothes, which they felt would look good for their individual performances. Then when they were dancing in the team events they would wear clothes, which were supplied by the University. On the whole these clothes were no longer in fashion in the ballroom dance world, as some of them would have been given to the team by former dancers, and others might be of even older stock. Nevertheless, a great effort was made by the team and the coaches to get newer clothes, as one of the problems for the team dances is that there are not always enough clothes to go around. It has been known on occasions that dancers have had to wear clothes previously worn by other dancers at the same event. Usually, however, the clothes are specially cleaned after each event. Some of the Ph D students have made their own dresses, and one of the dancers, who was about to complete her degree, even bought her own dress from one of the top dance clothes providers, an item that would have cost more than £3000.00. All the time that I was with the team they were constantly making attempts to get funding for their clothes for competitions. During the last year I was with the team they managed to obtain 'several hundred pounds' from the University, which enabled them to have made new Latin costumes for the top female dance team.

For the male dancers the situation is much the same as for the females in the beginning stages of competition. They buy clothes from their usual clothing outlet and for Latin dancing buy flamboyant shirts to wear with black trousers. When it comes to Ballroom dancing the tail suits are often hired or again supplied by the university. Some students have their own which they use for formal occasions. They too will

have bought special shoes and these, as with the female dancers, will be used exclusively for dancing.

In Ballroom dancing one can observe the couples maintaining the closed standard position, reflecting the formality of the original eighteenth century court dances. The clothes for these dances seem to emphasize the idea that they reflect for the dancers a romantic appeal and so they need to be seen to be graceful, elegant and romantic. For the competitive ballroom dancer, as one climbs the ladder of success, one's appearance as a dancer becomes more important, ultimately when one is at the top one is constrained to have the most exotic or glamorous dresses that one can afford. It became quite clear too when I did my field work in Blackpool, where the top dancers in the world compete, that it was quite costly to be able to dress in the appropriate clothes for competitions. It became clear after two visits to the annual competitions that in order to unravel what was involved in the costume aspects I would have to interview certain people in their more familiar surroundings when they were not so busy and overwhelmed by the event.

The commercial side of 'the Look'

The first clothes and accessory provider I went to was Dancesports International of Croydon. I had quite long talks with several members of the staff of this company at Blackpool, and so they were not surprised when I asked whether I might come to visit them. This is quite a modest company, which started out by providing dance books and later went on as well to furnishing and distributing clothes and accessories. We talked first of all about what was generally required for the top dancers. Often dancers would have their own dressmakers, who would make for them on average ten dresses per year. The dresses can cost up to about £3000 each depending on the feathers, gem crystals and so forth on the dress. I asked how couples could afford them and I was told that what often happens is that a dress will be worn by a prestigious dancer and then when she goes abroad, for example, to Japan, the dress will be sold there as 'worn by so and so at such and such an event'. It would seem that such a recommendation is believed to carry with it an aura of talent and success, perhaps derived from the charisma of the previous owner. Since the attire of individual male dancers tends to be less distinctive and is in any case rather less costly, this avenue for renewal of costume would appear not to be similarly open to the man.

For the less well off this company has a very successful stall where they sell second-hand clothes. I observed these transactions and interviewed the saleswoman there, who was from South Africa. I noted that dancers would bring the clothes to the stall, and Dancesports would sell the dress, or suit, for them, taking a commission. In this way a dancer could get a nearly new dress or suit for appreciably less than it would cost were it previously unworn. In the case of dresses, there would be little chance that it would be noticed that the dress was not a new one, as the dancer would not have been seen wearing it before. Incidentally this stall also provides free second-hand shoes for the ballroom dancers in Soweto, South Africa, as part of their charitable work.

There are further requirements for a top female dancer. As mentioned earlier, shoes could cost from £35-£50, and they would not last all that long, since for a top dancer they will be in constant use. She will need several pairs. Then for a Latin dancer body tan would be required, as previously mentioned the assumption is that all Latin American people have dark skins, this tanning solution will cost from about £10-£16 per tube: the more expensive the one used the less likely, I was told, that the solution would run when the dancer started to get hot and therefore be less likely to stain the clothes. With regard to make-up in general, the more money one can afford the more likely one is to use the more expensive brands seen in the retail shops. These, of course, can cost as much or as little as one wishes to pay.

Eyelashes and nails for the top people would be attended to in salons. In Blackpool I noted flyers advertising them at the Winter Gardens. I went into the salons and was told that if one had all the full cosmetic procedures it could cost anything up to about £50.00. Hair extensions are also part of 'the Look': these will be bought and will also vary in price depending on quality and length. It is less likely that a dancer will go to a hairdresser, as on the whole dancers wear their hair long, which usually means that they have to find ways to pin their hair up to prevent it from getting in the way of their dance routines. Costume jewellery is worn in places that will be seen by the judges, and tends to be glittery so that it is more likely to be seen. Sparkling earrings such as those made from Austrian crystal are very popular, although they cannot always be guaranteed to stay on, and as a result, they have been known to be stuck on with Superglue or Velcro. The impact of necklaces and pendants is more limited, as the dancers, especially in Ballroom dancing, are in a closed position facing their partners.

Another essential for the dancers would be music, compact discs and dance books, which, although not strictly coming under the umbrella of 'the Look', are also essential for understanding and conveying the whole subjective concept of competitive ballroom dancers. If shared with their partners the cost could be anything from about £15.00 upwards.

For the male dancer a new suit will cost about £450.00. Shoes will cost about £50.00 and the tanning make-up, shirts, and accessories such as bow ties and cuff links and so forth, cost about £60.00. On the whole the men tend to dress down in order to allow the women to figure more prominently as part of the spectacle.

For the Latin look a dress for a top female dancer would cost about £1500. Shoes would be about £50.00, tan about £15.00, although a body stocking would be the base of this dress. A special type of fishnet stocking is also worn. Nails, coiffures and hairdos are about the same as for the ballroom dance and cost much the same.

The men would wear black tight stretch trousers and more often than not a black top, although they will sometimes wear a top matching the colour of their partner's dress. As mentioned earlier, it is a convention that the impression should be given that both men and women should be made to resemble stylised/stereotypical mages of Latin Americans, an impression often resented by genuine Latin Americans (though some are simply amused). This convention of course represents a deliberate conscious and formal assumption by the judges and the onlookers and these dances are perceived as retaining their raw sensuality in attitude, motions and especially costume. Less is more when it comes to Latin costumes for female dancers, drawing attention to the sensuality of the movements as well as to the dancers' taut and muscular physiques.

Another aspect that deserves mention although not strictly part of 'the Look' in the sense of this work, is body care, which is however a further factor in achieving it. Many of the dancers go to aerobic or fitness classes in order to bring themselves closer to what they see as desirable for 'the Look', or likely to help to maintain it. It is said that ballet dancers have a high incidence of anorexia nervosa. This is not so constantly mentioned in competitive dance but may be contributory as such emphasis is put on the ideal body and looks. Dance injuries are not uncommon and one of the sales people in Dancesport informed me that the dancers quite often go to osteopaths as well.

After my visit to Dancesport I went to Chrisanne, who are considered one of the top suppliers for clothes and dance accessories in the world. There it was a very different situation from that at Dancesport International. Chrisanne employs quite a large number of international staff, and most of them speak other languages as well as English and many were not born in Britain; as a result of this many of them were able to converse with their customers in their native languages, or one common to them both apart from English if necessary. Again, as I had done with Dancesport we talked about those starting off in the dance competition world. They were in agreement with Dancesport in talking about what a less well off person might get. While they do not have the second hand-clothes facility, they do offer ideas on the up-to-date styles, materials, and cheaper dressmakers, if the dancer does not have the money to pay for a Chrisanne designed dress.

The routine is somewhat different when one goes to buy a gown at Chrisanne. It is comparable, I imagine, to going to buy from a couturier, which of course may help to account for the cost of the product. For the top dancer one will be met by a sales woman, who will then show one into a small room where there will be discussion of what sort of dress is required, for what purpose, and how much the customer would wish to pay for the dress. Then will come choosing the required style and materials and so forth, followed by going to the fitting room to be measured. For clients with an open budget much of the sparkling effect on the dresses would come from crystals, and the Swarovski crystals used by Chrisanne are the same as those used by Versace.

Chrisanne has all the clothes, accessories and other items required by women for competitive ballroom dancing. For the men there are the accessories, such as shoes and a limited range of jewelry, but not the suits; for the suits a man would be recommended to go to a tailor. With regard to the Latin clothes for men it was agreed that the men still wear black trousers on the whole, and in fact in amateur dancing they are only allowed to wear navy or black. Until recently men might wear any colour. This was seen as “over the top” and objected to by certain other male dancers, and as a result, new rules were made in 1998 by the British Dance Council about what colours should be worn for dance.

Malene, who comes from Denmark, was my guide and informant at Chrisanne, and is, with her Dutch husband Kenn, a national champion of Denmark. She told me

that Chrisanne sponsors them, as well as a further thirty-one couples. An example of what happens in this form of sponsorship is that one of the female dancers, having been given thirty dresses per year, when she dances abroad will sell them on behalf of the company as nearly new, worn at certain prestigious competitions.

From discussion with Malene and on looking at the Chrisanne brochure I found that prices were similar to what had been discussed at Dancesport. Ballroom dresses were about £2000.00, and these were dresses off the peg. For Chrisanne this means they are made and then altered to fit the women who buy them. The shoes are about £40.00 per pair and most other goods were in the same price range as at Dancesport.

After our discussion Malene showed me round the building, I saw where the dresses were made and also had the opportunity to meet the designers. When I asked them where they got their ideas for the creations they said that they looked at magazines such as *Hello* and also took note of the fashionable ball gowns. This appeared to me a rather strange criterion of suitability, whether for the dancers, the judges or the spectators. However, many of the designs did not appear to be in harmony with current fashion. My impression was that rather than keeping strictly to current fashion, the fashion would be consulted and then adapted in order to show off dancers to the best of their availability. In order to consolidate my impression of what was happening I contacted the Victoria and Albert Museum, Textiles and Dress Section, and spoke to Sonnet Stanfill the 20th Century Dress Curator. She did not know precisely about ball gowns and male evening clothes at present but sent me references on clothes generally.

Of course, although an anthropological interest in clothes is no new thing, the approach here perhaps diverges both from the usual functional considerations and from the question of the purely or mainly decorative. Costume also plays an important in ritual, and the question of the ritual component in competitive ballroom dancing is one I have already examined (Chapter Three); but the association of ritual with Western dancing is one which the participant might be shy about recognizing. When discussing with some of the dancers why they felt clothes were so important, it emerged that they felt that clothes were an expression of their identity. One of the unusual aspects in this type of dance is that, on the whole, the dancers can choose what clothes they wear. When interviewing Rosalind Kemp, a freelance theatrical costumier, who makes clothes for classic ballet dancers, she said that there

usually the clothes are chosen by the wardrobe supervisor, and in the smaller companies by the choreographers. She said the dancers have really no say in what they wear. Usually the design of the clothes is associated with the scenery, background or stage furniture. It is felt that this gives a complete picture of what the performance should portray. On only one occasion does she remember a dancer protesting; she immediately referred him to the designer, who would not change the style. Interestingly the dancer managed to damage his costume during rehearsal and was unable to wear it at the performance. Rosalind felt that this was probably intentional and was the only way the dancer could avoid wearing it. This appears so different from CBD where the men and women can wear clothes of their own choice as long as they come within the standards set down by the rules of British Dance Council.

Other informants admitted that the clothes they wear in competitive dance form part of a strategy for fulfilling a sort of fantasy life away from the stresses of the modern world. Certainly at the time when competitive ballroom dancing started in the twenties, there was a great deal of urban hardship, and many women went to the dance halls in order to get away from their familiar miserable world. For instance, in the case of taxi-hall dancers, one of the more unusual variations on ballroom dancing, they chose to enter an unreal world and earn money by dancing, and dressing up to do so, rather than work in factories or humdrum jobs. In present times the social pressures may on the whole be quite different from the 1920s, nevertheless many young people – and their elders - are still searching for activities, which can take them out of themselves either as participants or observers.

In the making of 'the Look' there are many things needing consideration, such as, what is the Look is, and who it is for, how it is perceived and what does it communicate to those who regard it. By describing 'the Look' in such detail I believe that I have taken a step towards answering these questions, and I hope to have conveyed how important it can be in this (and other) types of performance.

CHAPTER SIX

University Dance Competitions

Up to this point I have concentrated on such preliminary and peripheral matters as learning to dance, the essentials of costume, the nature of competition and the motivations involved in the formation of dance partnerships. Each of these could be linked with a category of its own: the acquisition of skills, especially physical skills; dressing up, and the extent to which in the context of competitive dance it could be compared and either contrasted or equated with dressing up for other purposes; the resemblance or otherwise to sporting competitions, and the significance of the choices exercised in choosing partners. In this chapter and the one that follows I consider CBD events in which all the elements discussed in the previous chapters come together. Here I discuss the amateur university dance competitions – the people who make up the teams, their preparation for competitions, the nature of the competition and their views on the practices and performances. In particular my concern has been to show what CBD has meant to the dancers and how it can affect their lives.

In the accounts and discussions which follow it should be noted that the university teams are made up of young adults with secure professional futures before them and however devoted they are to CBD it cannot be expected ever to dominate their lives, whereas those taking part in other, independent-couple, competitions are likely to include a proportion who expect to take up CBD as a profession, either as competitors or teachers or both. This question is comprehensively covered by Patricia Penny in an article in *Dance Research* (1999). She points out that competition ballroom dancing in Britain (and one might add, in a number of other countries) is accessible to people of every age and background and is the focus of attention of a sizeable sub-culture ranging through economic, social and occupational strata. She is inclined to be critical of studies of the subject, which neglect strictly quantitative parameters, and I fear that the present might be included among those; but what is attempted here is a qualitative analysis (Marshall and Rossman 1995).

The samples used, the informants questioned, resulted from a wish for them to be representative purely of the state and circumstances of CBD on a wide, but not exhaustive, scale, though without any initial fixed hypothesis and without coming to definitive conclusions except insofar as the samples could be regarded as

representative. The samples, in short, were chosen as they presented, not specifically selected: the dance schools for their accessibility and good reputes, the informants were not cajoled but presenting spontaneously and answering readily to questions. This might be seen as violating the respect traditionally given to objective balance; but as James Clifford and George Marcus point out, the so-called self-reflexive 'field-work account' has been gaining in acceptability, largely because it can 'provide an important forum for the discussion of a wide range of issues' (1986:14). The foregoing chapters will also have shown that the categories chosen and explored are at once relevant and capable of analysis along such lines and applicable to the subject of the study. It remains to describe the application of the approach on a wider field, taking into consideration all these categories and a few more.

In making decisions about the specifics of the field-work I should do I was guided not only by my own interests and inclinations, by academic advice and by the opportunities which presented themselves along the way, but also by advice from interested parties whose approach was not academic but who appeared to be able to discern some benefit to their own interests from the study I projected. These benefactors have mainly been acknowledged in foregoing chapters. I have not so far, however, sufficiently emphasized that, though I often encountered evasion and secretiveness, no influence was exerted on me to make me express any particular opinions, and that on the whole my reception was gratifyingly cordial and generous. Both in my association with the Oxford Dance Sport Team and in my visits to the Blackpool Festival I was able to assemble a range of data that I required. This included observation, informal conversations, interviews and printed material.

The Oxford Dance Sport Team

The Oxford Experience

The main reason that I wanted to see the Oxford University Dance Sport Teams at work was that I hoped it would enable me to observe the process of preparation for competition of a group of dancers knitted by external factors into a team, or set of teams. As an added bonus to myself and my project was the consideration that as they were academic students, they would be more able to understand the concept of research than were many of those at my dance classes

University vacation times differ, and as a result I missed most of the competitions in the University League in which Oxford took part. Catherine Elliott, the team captain, told me that the teams had agreed to my watching them during their rehearsals and

to my going with them to competitions. For that academic year I would be able only to go to the annual Varsity match between Oxford and Cambridge, but I did arrange to be at their main rehearsals.

The rehearsal was held at the Morris Motors Social Centre, in the Blackbird Leys area of Oxford. The Ballroom section, where the rehearsals were held, was upstairs and was now mostly used for functions and for disco dancing on Saturday evenings. This place had a specially sprung floor for dances and was large enough for the students to work out all their routines. I sat beside David, who, having just obtained his degree, was no longer eligible to be picked for the A team (the first team), although he was still eligible for the B team, since he had started dancing with them before graduating. Vicky, one of the coaches, announced the 'walk on', in which individuals practice dance steps in a large group before going back to their partners. Bruce Anderson, the other coach for the team, taught the men while Vicky coached the women. The two top dancers of the team demonstrated what ought to be done.

On returning from the 'walk on' David told me that he was not as fit as he would like to be, due to his dropping everything else, including exercise, in order to complete his thesis. One of his revealing comments was that 'CBD is not reality, it's fantasy, you put on the clothes, you dress up, and at once you are in another world.' This theme recurred quite frequently in my research and is dealt with in detail later. When the practice for the A team was finished Vicky gave another talk to the team, much on the pattern of what one sees at sports events, where teams muster around the coaches. The group discussed what was to happen before the Varsity match, and were told of several places where couples could go during the week for lessons on improving their style from Vicky or Bruce, after which eight couples would be chosen as the A team. Both teams would be chosen the following week. There would be reserves for both teams: anyone in the reserve for the A team would automatically be in the B team.

Once Vicky finished, the couples started to do the waltz. The styles among the couples seemed to differ markedly. This may have had something to do with body shapes as well as dancing techniques. One would often see couples stop dancing and then re-start, as though they were going over with each other things that seemed right or wrong in what they did. Vicky and Bruce watched from the stage and now and then intervened. These students appeared to have a good deal of style, poise

and energy, although perhaps some of their technique was dissipated in their enthusiasm.

Vicky told me that Nick (whom I had met at the Albert Hall) was their best dancer and it was hoped that he would get a full Blue (that is, an award given by the University for a student excelling in sport) for dance sport. Usually the men in dance sport only get a half Blue if they are selected for the A team while the women get a full Blue. In spite of my making many enquiries about this no one knew why this should be the case, except that it was perhaps because the women appeared to have to do more dancing. (On the other hand it was thought that in several sports such as tennis and golf women are expected to do less in order to win championships). Nick said that in spite of winning all the events up to the National (the biggest event in the University Sportsdance calendar) the Oxford team had come second to Imperial College, which meant that he was less likely to get his full Blue. Since then, however, in an article in *The Times* (10th March 2003) Ruth Gledhill has reported that 'Men at Oxford University can now dance their way to a full Blue.' The article went on to explain that due to the growing status of competitive ballroom dancing, it is now recognised by Sport England and the International Olympic Committee. In view of this the men would be entitled to discretionary full-Blue status. The difference between the discretionary Blue and the full Blue is that, for the usual sports events all the A team would obtain a Blue, whereas for the discretionary Blue only two male members of the A team would be entitled. Since 1997 all the female dancers in the A team have been entitled to a full Blue.

Clothes constituted a category frequently discussed, mostly in an attempt to find out who, if any, had their own costumes. For those without costumes Vicky would have to arrange to get some with the right sizes and styles, those most appropriate for each person if possible. It was felt that it would have been better if the men in each team did not have to share clothing, but this was not always possible, and so it was stated that it was preferable that the A team have the cleaner clothes. The forthcoming competition was to be held in Cambridge. One of the men in the team had suggested that it would be informative for me to see what happened in the coach before the match and recommended that I try to do so. Vicky told me that the Cambridge team was much wealthier and as a result could spend more on costumes.

A student from Malaysia told me that he had a strong impression that male students from Asia tend to take to dancing at an earlier stage at University than their British

counterparts. He said that dancing is popular with men in Asia, unlike in the United Kingdom where ballroom dancing is not so readily accepted as a men's pastime. Yet another male student independently suggested that I should travel in the coach with the team on the way to competitions, to observe how nervous people were and how they started preparing for the match even before they reached their destination. On his being asked if they chose their own partners he said no, this is something that the coaches and team captains usually decide, although there is also some input from the dancers themselves. Generally at the beginning of the season Vicky and Bruce decided who should dance with whom. This was quite interesting, as somehow the couples gave the impression of being social couples as well as dance partners and appeared to come to the ballroom together and also to leave with each other.

This practice session conveyed the impression of a hard-working yet happy event. The couples hardly stopped dancing except during the 'walk-ons', and when they wished to practice in the corner to see how they could perfect their steps, there also appeared to be none of the self-consciousness one might have expected from the dancers. It was informative, but after over five hours with the dance team and about as long in travelling time I decided that if this was the usual case it would probably be best for me rarely to watch the team in the evening and to concentrate on being present on Sundays.

The following Sunday

On the way to the practice session I met Litza, one of the dancers, who comes from Greece. She had studied ballet and loved dancing. She had only been dancing for a year but hoped to get into the B team. She explained that when we arrived there would still be people having dance lessons and that from now on only the A team would be getting private coaching. Catherine, the team captain, said that if I was coming to the Varsity match at Cambridge I would be most welcome to come on the coach with the teams. She thought it would be useful to see what happened on the way and would help to cement my relationship with the other team members. Today was the day when the teams would be chosen. She explained that in the teams there would be a squad of eighteen couples. The A team comprises eight couples with two couples in reserve. If the reserve couples do not dance they would automatically be chosen for the B team; this is the reason for there being only six couples in the B team. She then verified that the coach would leave Oxford at 8am. In Cambridge dancing would start at 11am and go on till about midnight.

The practice started with the 'warm up' for everyone, during which some students continued with their dance lessons. Some of the students were wearing dance dresses for the event; these tended to be such costumes as tulle over black leotards. One of the students whose partner had not arrived asked another student if he would video her while she was dancing. The waltz was used as the 'warm up' dance, but as the temperature was so high, inside and out of doors, the couples were finding it very hard going even just doing the waltz. They had to stop dancing quite frequently for water because of the intense heat.

Bruce, Vicky and Catherine sat on the edge of the stage and asked seven couples to start waltzing for the A team trials. The couples worked very hard at this and when they finished all the other students clapped them. Then another seven couples followed and in the third round there were six couples doing the same. They seemed less lively than in the week before: was it the heat, or were they getting slightly stale, having practised every day the previous week? The waltz was followed by the cha cha, the quickstep and the jive, in much the same way as the heats had been conducted for the waltz.

After completing the trials for the A team the same procedure was followed for the B team. One could clearly see the difference in the standards of the two prospective teams. Some of these dancers, too, did not seem as accomplished as on the previous occasion when I had watched them dance. Several made excuses, which seemed quite genuine, about pressure of work; some had examinations, vivas, as well as not having time to complete projects. Bruce said that the year before they had had a much better team and did not doubt that they would win, but this year there was a much closer competition. Cambridge had improved greatly, and the teams were not yet getting things quite right, and he was not really sure what would happen. Cambridge had also had one more week of practice, which did not help matters.

This turned out to be a day of drama and nerves for the dancers and probably the coaches too. The dancers seemed to feel dejected and unsure where they stood. Although they all claimed it was a recreational pastime, there was no doubt that they were all quite shocked at their not having improved much in spite of the seven days more dancing they had done. Bruce remarked that three people were trying to choose the teams and none was happy with the performance of the dancers. He added that if they felt that this was their best, they would not win. He therefore suggested that they might consider changing partners and see if this would make

things better. The students agreed that they would try a change if it meant that the team would win, and some of the dancers did change partners in order to do two 'trial' dances. Eventually after the trials were completed it was decided that all should return to their original partners. Until this was decided one could see that the dancers were very tense about what had happened. Vicky suggested that the dancers dance a rumba with their social partners and/or with whomever they wished. One or two of them remarked, 'Look how much better we are when we're dancing with our girlfriends!' Vicky's immediate response was 'Yes, it's OK when you're speaking to each other - but when you quarrel!!' There was general laughter; the dancers knew exactly what she meant.

I overheard some of the female dancers complaining to Bruce about their partners, who did not always come to practices and did not seem to be taking their dancing seriously. Towards the end of the session, two or three of the dancers commented that an account of what happened when things were not quite right might be interesting for my dance diary. In the beginning the dancers had agreed that I could write up details of what was happening, their conversations and so forth, but they were not at all happy about the idea of a tape recorder. This was actually mentioned at most stages of my field- work. It appears to be seen by the dancers as more formal and more invasive.

The next dance session was held at the Sports Centre of the John Radcliffe Hospital. The evening's match, was won by Imperial College, but not by as big a margin as Oxford had feared. There was some discussion of the music the previous week, which had not been as stimulating as before, and it was thought that it might have been one of the reasons for the poor dance performance. This could be one of the reasons for the tendency among dance competitors to have with them CDs or tapes of their preferred music. It is possible that these serve not only as memory aids when practising dances in private but also as familiar periodical stimuli. Catherine then confirmed the arrangements for the Varsity match.

When Vicky and Bruce arrived they commented that the couples having the lessons danced much better than they had the previous week. Among those having private lessons at this time were Nick and Jo. Jo had been voted the team captain for the new academic year. She told me that she and other members of the teams noted that I sat, watched, wrote and spoke to people only when there were breaks, and as a result they felt that I had not been intrusive in any way, since they were

accustomed to being watched when dancing. I had the impression that the dance committee had actually had another formal meeting about my presence and that she had been delegated to talk to me. Vicky told me that a specially good aspect of this method of teaching was that the members of the team all must be associated with Universities. In fact there is a league of University dancers. Vicky, and Bruce at a later date, said that there were political issues within the league, but not nearly as many as in the CBD world in general.

Lisa, a dancer from Antigua, told me how displeased she was with her partner. Apparently her partner was a very arrogant man who thought he knew it all and would not be told otherwise. Later one of the other male dancers talked quite candidly about him, saying in a caustic manner 'Have you met Lisa's partner? He is such an arrogant so and so, poor Lisa, she really has a hard time with him. I think last night's result may help to make him less conceited.' Her partner was not from the UK and I reflected on the frequency of ethnic judgements and their possible influence on dancing, but without coming to any firm conclusions.

Then the practising started, during this time some dancers danced on their own. No matter what was playing on the cassette recorder, they would not necessarily dance to the music, but would be concentrating on the steps of whatever dance they felt they needed to perfect, rather than what was actually being played. When this was finished it was time for a review of the previous evening's competition. The dancers were given two pieces of paper, which contained the comments from the judges on their better points and also those on which they were not so good. In these competitions the more marks received from the less able dancers in their heats often swings the overall outcome of the competition, so there also a great emphasis on the less accomplished dancers. Another pep-talk was given, in which the coaches said that they felt that the teams had not done too badly, as Imperial College had a strong line-up especially in the Latin American section. Imperial College beat Oxford by ten points in the Latin American, but by only two points in the Ballroom. The gist of the talk was that of any other pep-talk: DO YOUR BEST, don't think of how others are doing, doing your best will be good enough, if you all do that YOU CAN WIN.

Vicky then stopped the dancing to discuss make-up, hairstyles and so forth. The men were as interested in how the women looked as they were themselves, as most recognised that if the women looked the part, they would have a better chance of winning. Some of the newer dancers were slightly bemused, especially when it came

to talking about men's make-up. With regard to women's hairstyles, among the suggestions made were such things as bouffant and French pleat hairstyles for Ballroom, pony- tails and hairpieces for Latin American. Back- combing, and using henna to highlight their hair, would also be necessary. The nail polish for Ballroom would be in a pink tone, whereas for Latin American would be in an orange shade. They were told to wear lots of make-up, false eyelashes and so forth. Often their dance shoes would have become a little scuffed and they were told if this was the case they would have to dye them. The dance clothes, the dresses for women and suits for the men had all been dry-cleaned, but in spite of this they felt sticky to the contestants and some of the women seemed reluctant to wear the more outlandish dresses. (An example of some of the more outlandish dresses can be seen in Appendix B).

The Varsity match

On arrival at the bus departure site I found the dancers greatly excited, carefully placing their clothes, often in special clothes containers, either in the luggage compartment or on racks to avoid getting them crushed. To save time the women started getting their hair ready on their way to the match Vicky brushed a girl's hair and got it into a French pleat, while others were helping to plait one another's hair. The application of make-up would be done either singly or in pairs. (See Appendix B) Often social couples, who were not necessarily dance partners, would be advising each other on what looked best. Members of the team went around the bus encouraging one another. About half way through the journey the bus stopped at a roadway café. Many of the students had not had breakfast; some thought it was not good to eat too much before dancing.

When we arrived the hall was decorated with light (Cambridge) and dark (Oxford) blue balloons and ribbons. On the opposite side to the stage were two areas marked off and designated as areas for each team to leave their clothes and for their supporters to sit. The dancers changed in the toilets, and going through to the ladies' toilet there were students scattered all over the place, applying make-up, needing help to put on their clothes, and even trying out their dance routines.

When the dancing opened at 11am there was general dancing, open to anyone whether competitor or spectator. At midday the first competition started for the B teams; this was for a waltz and a quickstep. My impression was that Oxford was better than Cambridge, but I could have been wrong. During this and other early

events, the students wore smart casual clothes, which it was hoped would show their dancing off to good effect. Their fancier clothes would be worn later. This competition finished at about one o'clock, and then a Non-Team event took place. This was for students and ex-students who had never danced in a University team and were not dancing in either of the teams that day. This went on until 1.45, when the B team returned, this time to dance Latin American, the cha cha and the rumba. Again I felt that they had done better than the Cambridge team. By watching and participating in dancing for over a year I was well aware of what coaches and judges would be looking for in the way of dancing and performance, such as apparent effortless by the dancers to achieve the desired affect. After the B team had completed their initial Latin American dance steps, absolute beginners were invited on to the floor to dance a waltz, followed by the cha cha . By doing two dances all the couples were given the chance to dance twice. Then the beginners also danced. These were students who had started dancing since the previous Varsity match, and they danced a waltz, a cha cha cha, and a salsa (a dance not normally included in student competitions).

For the dancing the couples were all numbered, with the numbers pinned on the back of the male dancers' clothes. Throughout the dances, and especially loudly when the teams came on, all the spectators cheered for their teams and their Universities. As well as the coaches the A team was also there to encourage the B team and give them tips. At some time after 4pm, rather than at 3pm as advertised, the A teams came on. They, too, started with a waltz and quickstep. I gained the impression that Oxford was not as good as Cambridge. After they completed their dances a demonstration was given by a Cambridge off-beat team which was quite fun. The parents of one of the dancers expressed surprise that none of the dancers drank alcohol during the competition. It was true: when wandering around during the general dancing session, in the bar I observed only judges, coaches and spectators.

The dancing continued with the A team Latin American dancers. The Cambridge team was much more extrovert in their performance, which made them very popular with the spectators. Many of the dancers from Cambridge, especially the men, were not English and seemed far less inhibited than their Oxford English counterparts. The best female dancer in the Cambridge Latin team was a Spanish woman who was quite noisy and also appeared uninhibited in her performance. She had a large following in the crowd, and of course there were rather more Cambridge than Oxford supporters present. Whenever she was dancing the crowd shouted in a most

enthusiastic way. These dances were followed by Rock'n roll for beginners and then an Open competition for all students and ex-students. At this juncture many of the students left the dance arena and shortly afterwards reappeared in all their "best dance clothes" to dance in the actual Varsity Match competitions. However before this started there was a dance demonstration, by a group known as the XS Latin American Formation Team. At many of the competition events a group or couple would be brought in for a demonstration as part of the entertainment before the grand parade, when the dancers from both official teams would parade in their finery around the dance floors carrying their team banners, they were loudly cheered by the spectators. After this the dancers danced for their University teams, with Mexican waves in the audience and cheering either for Oxford or Cambridge in an orchestrated manner. At the same time there would be individuals calling out their favourites' numbers. It was very reminiscent of what might happen at a football match.

There were other competitions for ex-champions, current students who have never danced for the teams. These events were of lesser importance and so during this time the principal judges were checking the marking for the presentation. For each event there were at least three judges who stood at the edge of the dance floor. When each heat was completed runners took the marks to other judges who were sitting on the stage just above where the presentation cups and trophies were on display. The judges were also dressed in smart casual wear at the beginning of the day, but as the day progressed to evening they too became more formally dressed. The female judges wore long evening dresses and the male judges formal suits.

The Oxford team did lose the overall competition but because the event was running so late I was not able to remain with them to discuss what had happened. In view of my not being there to congratulate and commiserate with the dancers I sent them a letter saying that I hoped to see them at the beginning of the dancing season. A letter arrived from Jo in mid October telling me about the dates of the university dance trials. Jo addressed me as an honorary member of the Oxford team. On two occasions I went to the dance practices on a Sunday, and at one of these discussed with the team captain and coaches whether I might possibly hand out a questionnaire. They were agreeable to this and felt it might prove interesting to them as well as to me. When told what the questions would be they agreed that they were appropriate.

I went to one of the evening practices the night before the match at Warwick. I had been directed to an unfamiliar venue. Dancers had been there from 4pm for lessons to improve their dancing skills as well as practising for tomorrow's competition. On the ground floor there were dancers practising, while upstairs there were people having dance lessons, which went on all the time I was there. I was greeted very warmly by Jo, who suggested that I leave my questionnaires, complete with stamped addressed envelopes, in a certain place and if they were not all collected she would make sure that the students did get them. The lessons were then interrupted for the pre-competition pep- talks. There were quite a few arguments going on which I did not understand, there were obviously underlying conflicts, which no doubt I would find out about later. For the beginners there was anxiety about how to walk out for prizes and also how to do the march before the team competitions. This aspect also concerned the more experienced dancers, but in the end I did notice that they showed them what to do. During the talk it was interesting to note that Vicky, Bruce and Jo often talked about different topics at the same time, I wondered if this was confusing to the dancers or if this was a usual pre-competition happening. At times Jo got quite frustrated as she had several matters to sort out and asked the students if they were listening to her.

During a walk with some of the students, and over a meal, we discussed how much it costs to get ready for and to enter dance competitions. Firstly they have to be members of the University Dance Club for which the annual fee is £60; it costs £10 for entering events, £16 for going on the coach and £20 per hour for dance lessons with Vicky or Bruce. About £50 is needed for shoes, make-up and all the smaller items required. This amount did not include dresses, or the suits, often supplied by the University. They would have preferred to have their own things but would not have been able to afford them. (The question of expenditure is discussed elsewhere). There was also some concern expressed, as they knew they would have to dance for about 12 hours next day and realized how exhausted they would be afterwards.

Warwick

The following morning I made my way to the coach in the company of several of the team. They were heavily laden with dresses, suits and so forth for the competition. All the students, apart from one, came in good time, but we had to wait more than an hour for one of the A team dancers. Even though we were late, at about an hour into the journey we stopped for a bite to eat, as most of us had not had breakfast. The planning of refreshments plays a significant part in these travels. It is essential that

neither hunger, and /or thirst, nor over consumption, should be allowed to interfere with the subsequent physical performances - another point linking CBD with sporting contests. Then we left the motorway on our way to Corby where the competition was being held, hosted by Warwick University.

We arrived late and the dancers had to change in a hurry. The other dancers were somewhat displeased with the late arrival as it meant a late start to the competition. The dancers all changed quickly in the public dance hall, they were slightly embarrassed by this, but realised they just had to get on as fast as they could. Each area had a notice on the wall saying which was the area designated for the teams, the teams there that day were from Bath, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Hull, Imperial College, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Sheffield, East Anglia and Warwick Universities.

Once the Oxford team was ready the dancing started with the beginners' waltz and the quickstep, both of which had three heats. Next came a competition for those who were called basic dancers - these are those who are not absolute beginners - and in all there were eight heats for those dancers in order to get to the semifinals. The final for this competition did not start until after 9pm. There were four teams representing many of the larger Universities, although not all the Universities had as large a number of members as Oxford and Cambridge; those were the A, B, C, and D teams. Then came an open event for those in the A teams, followed by the B teams, when they danced the tango, which is not normally included in the University match events. The B, C and D teams started with the beginners' cha cha followed by the jive, again dancing up to the semi-finals as they had with the Ballroom section of dancing. During all these events a noisy supporting audience shouted for their friends but also in rivalry against individual supporters.

In between the competitions there was general dancing. This gave the spectators the chance to show off and dance and those who in competitions did not dance with their social partners could do so at these times. Essentially the 'general dance' times were when the judges did the marking and had coffee breaks. It was also a time when the coaches, captains and more experienced dancers would give advice to the dancers who were beginners. As the day wore on it was not uncommon to see the coaches in the bar area gossiping. It was clear that they were working hard but one also felt that in spite of the rivalry there was also quite a strong bond among the coaches. I discovered later that many students would dance for more than one team in their

University dance career. These were mostly dancers who started dancing in one team as undergraduates, and later continued their studies at another university. There were advantages and disadvantages in this, as the coaches got to know the strengths and weaknesses of their rival teams and so there were few elements of surprise. This was one way in which Vicky and Bruce could judge so easily before the dancing started how well their teams would do.

As in the Varsity Match at Cambridge the clothes worn for dances in the early part of the day tended to be less formal. Here the female dancers who danced Latin American dances tended to wear short skirts, and then when they were dancing Ballroom changed into long skirts. The men often wore black trousers and casual tops ; these were felt to be the best for showing off the dancing. As at Cambridge the competition clothes were only worn for the actual match events. Again, concern was expressed by the coaches, and some members of the teams about their 'special dresses' which they felt showed signs of age and wear. The Oxford team gets much less from University funds than some other teams, so they cannot afford better dresses to help give them the ideal 'Look'. This was verified at the Teams' walk-on and Team matches when we saw that many of the teams had matching clothes for the competitions, which certainly made a much better overall impression.

I have not felt it appropriate to describe dance steps in detail, since that has been done by others (Moore 1986 and Penny 1999 among them) more eloquently than I ever could. However, after discussion with dancers, teachers/coaches and students they have helped me to understand what is required from the dancers. One thing that is apparent, is, that when looking at dancers, especially in the Ballroom style, the easier the dancing looks, often the better the dancers. After describing another competition I hope to be more able to elaborate on performance in connection with CBD.

After six o'clock, while the dancers were getting ready for the Team Walk-On and the Team Matches, the judges went away to eat and things seemed to fall even further behind the advertised time. Many of the dancers had ample supplies of water and drinks, often of the sugary kind, to stop them from becoming dehydrated and to give them some extra energy.

For the Team Walk-On, each University came on to the sound of a fanfare of trumpets, played from a cassette recorder. Each team carried a banner of its

University and paraded around the dance floor and assembled for the cheering. The team matches then commenced. These were followed by a cabaret from two dance professionals who were expected also to be involved in some of the judging. The Oxford beginners did quite well but yet again Cambridge was the best team, Oxford and Imperial College were the runners up. These three are the teams that tend to enter the highest number of competitors and so have a much better chance of winning. When this was discussed with some of the dancers from the smaller teams they did not seem to mind, saying such things as 'well-- they always have been better, who knows what will happen next time' It felt as though on the whole many of the other teams entered for the fun of it whereas the Oxford, Cambridge, and Imperial College dancers took it all much more seriously.

When the dancers gathered, well after midnight, to get on the coach for Oxford, most of the beginners had managed to get some sort of small prize and so for them it was felt as quite an achievement. The coach drove on for over an hour and then stopped at a motorway restaurant. This is rather important for the team, as it gives them the chance to calm down after the event. Many of the dancers too were quite hungry; they had been unable to eat before and during the dances, partly through nerves, but also because that tended to make them feel too bloated to dance. Consequently large quantities of food were consumed during this stop. At the beginning of the homeward journey there had been a lot of banter and discussion with coaches, but once we left the motorway restaurant the lights were put out on the bus many tried to sleep or at least rest. It was after 4 am by the time we reached Oxford.

Sheffield

There was another early start for the team when leaving to compete in Sheffield, and I took the opportunity to find out more about how the women dancers maintained their costumes. After sitting on the coach for some time I noticed one of the former A team dancers, who is allowed to dance in certain categories, with a most ornate red ball gown, sticking rhinestone replacements on to her Chrisanne dress. She explained to me that they often come off especially during very vigorous dancing, This underlined one of the more important factors differentiating female from male responsibilities in these competitions, one I had not previously considered. The comparative uniformity and simplicity of male attire, leading to less need for emergency repairs and relatively easy interchangeability between individuals of much the same build and size, placed a supplementary burden on the women which the men did not share. Though large maintenance tasks for the women were not at all

conspicuous, there was a constant need for minor repairs, opportunities for which had to be taken as they arose.

At the competition there had been some changes of dance partners since the last match. Apparently one of the team dancers had quarrelled with the coach within the past week and as a result there had been a change around to fill the gap in the best way possible. Another dancer and his girlfriend asked if they could dance together as partners, but this was not popular with the other dancers. In the end he stated that, though not wanting to do it, if they could not dance together he would resign from the team. With reluctance the other team members and coaches gave in to his request. A B team couple had done much the same thing, danced with other partners and then requested to dance together and it was agreed they could do so. It did not seem that there were any problems with this. It has to be said, however, that sometimes in the past dancers have been reluctant to share their bad experiences with me, and I could not be sure that it was not the case here.

Jo, the team captain, had also changed her partner, but this did not seem as happy an arrangement as her previous partnership had been. Her previous partner now preferred to dance in the Latin American style and had a partner who was new to the group. Most of the other dancers felt that he was much better at the Ballroom style than Latin American but had agreed to let him have a go as he had always been one of the most successful dancers in the team. He was also very friendly and backed the dancer who quarrelled with the coach, and I wondered if this had been a wise move.

A dancer who interested me was Nick, one of the best dancers in the team. At previous dances I had often wondered why he did not shine as much as he appeared to during practice. He then changed partners, as his girlfriend Penny, who had previously danced for Imperial College, was now studying at Oxford. Suddenly at the competitions he was much more in evidence, and on discussion with the others it became clear that Penny had quite an influence on him. Essentially Nick was a fairly quiet modest young man who loved dancing; in fact to quote him 'I dance because I have to'. However, up until his dancing with Penny his technique and so forth seemed to me to be excellent, but what he appeared not to have developed so much were his performance skills. At Penny's insistence he wore clothes that drew attention to him, he played much more to the audience and seemed no longer to be a stereotypically reserved Englishman but much more a stereotypically Latin American dancer. He and his partner were very successful and almost always were first in their

competitions. This made me think much more about performance in regard to this type of dance, a subject discussed in another chapter.

Early on in this dancing session the dancers seemed rather lacking in enthusiasm, although the beginners did quite well. As the day wore on the dancers became more active. Bruce spent quite a bit of his time with the judges and referees, while Vicky seemed to have a low profile at this event. Oxford appeared not to be doing very well, and eventually came third overall in the competitions. The team may have been reacting to the changes of personnel, and there certainly were tensions within it. An interesting thing about this venue was that the hall was octagonal in shape and the dancers had to adjust their dance pattern accordingly. Normally they dance in rectangularly shaped venues.

During one of the breaks the captain came to thank me for asking Chrisanne and Dance Sport International if they would consider helping the team. They did not have any money to buy clothes, unlike some the other teams. Previously I had said that if the occasion arose I would mention the team. Jo told me that she had heard from them but that what they offered was not really appropriate, inasmuch as they offered a discount on anything the team bought from them, As they had not much money, when they got money were more likely to get dressmakers to make up material rather than buy ready-made dresses. It now seemed likely that the University would give the teams a one-off grant for material to get some new Latin American dresses.

Weston super Mare

Again we were on the coach by 7am on our way to Weston super Mare. I took notice of several ostensibly small activities, noting the care with which the make- up was applied by one of the dancers. Another was getting help from two of her companions in putting up her hair in a particular way, which would stay securely for the dancing. I feel strongly that a too inquisitive approach can be quite invasive, and when paying attention to an activity I made absolutely sure that none of those I was observing did not mind, I feel that this is an ethical issue. When I discussed making similar records of what the men did on the bus, the men said that they would prefer if I did not observe them obtrusively, and I respected their wishes. On one level they knew that they were preparing for a performance but on another they felt a natural masculine shyness about being seen applying make- up.

As at the other venues there was an attempt to make the dance hall appear festive with balloons and ribbons decorating the walls. Cloths too were draped across the stage where some of the judges sit. The teams had designated areas in which to sit and to change for their competitions the bus, on this occasion. One of difficulties at the beginning was that the dancers often started and stopped and as there were so many dancers in the hall it was not always easy to notice of the ones I wished to observe, especially their feet. Not only that, but they often started and stopped during the dance, which prevented me from getting as uniform a view as I would have liked.

The Oxford dancers had improved since their last match, but so had the other teams, especially Imperial College. Cambridge danced well and eventually won most of the prizes. The beginners certainly danced with a lot of vigour and energy and were much better than they had been in Sheffield, but did not reach very far in the competitions. On reflection, what the teams seemed to lack were extra theatrical and performance qualities. They were very pleasant, agreeable people, whom one could not but like, and this came over on the dance floor, but this I suspect is not quite the ideal image for competitive ballroom dancing. The aggressive but polished performance, with a slightly over-the-top quality, seems to show up best in competitions. At performance classes at Roehampton it became apparent that in performance one has to get into a role, often by losing oneself completely and denying much of one's own existence. This is what some less experienced dancers seem unable to do.

Nick's partner Penny agreed that I might watch her applying her make-up. She knew she was quite a good dancer but also felt that she had to give her performance everything she could. She went about doing the make-up and costume in a particular way to achieve 'the Look' as well as she could, not the way in which she would normally be seen. She saw her dance as like a theatrical performance and this was the way she had to play it. She did not deny that she was very keen to win in the competitions. Vicky the coach suggested that the strong competitive drive and ability that enables many of the students to gain places in such Universities as Cambridge and Oxford can very well be harnessed into the dance competitions.

The teams did not do as well as they had hoped. One of the more dramatic moments was when a favoured couple did not get through to the semi-finals in the Latin competitions. Their number was not called out and neither they nor the Oxford team could believe it. In fact they went on to the floor. Although I did not hear their number

called, the judges read out the numbers again and they had to leave the floor. One of the female dancers rushed up to comfort the man and shortly afterwards he and his dance partner left the ballroom. I was told that since he had started dancing for Oxford he had always got into the semi-finals before. Some time later, when they returned, his brother, a very experienced dancer, also came to console him. As part of this, when the general dancing started he and his brother did a jive together. Men are not normally expected to dance together at these events although women can. By jiving together and putting on a very good performance it really helped to lighten the atmosphere: when they stopped they were given a round of applause. The defeat of this dancer and his partner was probably one of the most telling moments for the team as no one had expected that he would not do well.

On our way back as usual the coach stopped for the dancers to have a meal. On this occasion the captain and some of the more senior team members came to join me, and as they ate they discussed several team members including in particular one man and his partner who they felt did not dance well together. Another man's Latin American performance was also criticized, with most people agreeing that as far as they were concerned, he was better as a Ballroom dancer than as a Latin American one. During the discussion I could feel that they did not want me to discuss what was being said with other members of the team. When I told them that it was not my practice to talk about what was being said they seemed relieved.

Guildford

In Guildford I met up with the Oxford Dance Sport team at the venue and managed to find a good spot to put my luggage, with the agreement of Vicky. I made arrangements to pay special attention to Penny's routine when applying make-up.. Initially she was quite happy about this, but in the end it did not happen. She later admitted to me that she had wanted to be alone before the event. She had sent someone to find me but that person claimed not to have been able to find me. I had also been looking for her, but warily, since at the same time I recognised the tensions that some of the dancers are under, especially just before they compete. This video shot might not be possible again as the next match would be played at home, where the dancers normally apply their make-up before coming to the venue.

According to Vicky the man who had not got through to the semi-finals at the previous competition had decided in view of this that he did not want to dance for the team again. I felt sure that this represented a culmination of many small

disagreements between him and the rest. Later when I made some comment to his brother about his action regarding the team, he just shrugged his shoulders and lifted his head in a despairing way, as if to say, What can you expect? This resignation caused many problems for the dancers, who were very angry with him, there now had to be changes in the main team. Another problem which had arisen since I had last been with the team was that Jo, the team captain, had criticized her dancing partner, a Bulgarian, and he in retaliation had hit her, and as a result had been dismissed from the team. All the other members of the team felt that his conduct had been very bad. Everyone seemed quite shocked by what he had done. A dancer from Imperial College was called in to help. The judges knew about the substitute, and he danced with Jo as he had done in the past. Jo and the team were very happy about this and they danced well together. This cannot happen at the Varsity match so there would have to be new trials for the A team on Sunday.

Shortly before 4pm I made my way to the front of the complex and Garry Marvin, my supervisor, arrived a little later with his partner. Once Garry had found his bearings he drew attention to several aspects of which I had not previously taken notice. An example of this, what I had taken for granted, how short the dance heats are. He in fact timed them, and the average time was 1 minute 20 seconds. Of course this confirmed my idea that in order to get into the following heats you have to catch the eye of the judges in the beginning as being something special. This may be done by a particular quality of dancing or could even be by how couples look. By the time the dancers have reached the final heats in the competition, they will have been fully scrutinized by the judges, who will then be more able to assess the true quality of their dancing.

It appeared that things were going better this time. During one of the dance breaks Jo came to talk and asked, 'What are your impressions about the dancers and dancing? What makes a good competitor?' I explained that what I felt was partly needed in a successful competitor was the ability to go 'over the top,' to exaggerate more and to be rather more expansive than one would in real life, to be somehow more aggressive, more theatrical, in other words to put on a performance, rather than being one's usual pleasant and self-effacing self. Jo's response was to say she absolutely agreed, 'This is what I am trying to get over to them and somehow they don't seem to understand'. Jo is quite a bit younger than the other dancers, she was one of the few under-graduates in the team and a very experienced dancer, but

sometimes it appeared as though she did not always have the full backing of some of the older team members.

It was apparent by the end of this competition that in spite of the problems the Oxford team was doing much better, and in fact they won the competition overall. Much to the team's delight Cambridge did not win a single one of the major trophies. However, for Vicky and Bruce it was very disappointing that they did not win the A team competition, which is always considered the most prestigious trophy to be gained. It was won by Imperial College, the other team coached by Vicky, who admitted to me that at times she feels quite torn in her allegiances between the two teams. Nonetheless the dancers were very happy with the result. Possibly they were relieved that it went so well in view of all the dramas that had occurred over the previous few weeks. For me it was interesting that they had now become able to share their bad moments as well as the good ones. In the beginning they had felt able only to talk about the good things.

On the coach there was a great deal of merriment. Oxford's banner had been stolen by Cambridge, and Oxford in turn stole the Cambridge mascot, which was carried around, and even seen the following day at the Trials. The coach took a long time to get started but when it did the celebrations started, first of all a 'Queen' tape was played of 'We are the Champions' to which everyone sang along. Then after that a favourite compilation of dance tunes was played, some dancers danced up and down the aisles, those not dancing swayed in the seats singing all the time. This went on all the way to the motorway café. Even then when waiting for the food, quite a few of the dancers danced, the other people there were highly amused as were the staff, there appeared to be no hostility or anger from the other onlookers, if anything they seemed to enjoy the good humour even though it was after two o'clock in the morning. This brings out the distinct 'play' element associated with but not part of the actual competitive performance, an element, as Johan Huizinga (1955:3) points out, seen also in other enthusiastic pursuits however seriously intended.

Now everyone was getting geared up for the Varsity match. It was expected that Cambridge would pull out all the stops in order to win. We were all preparing for the Trials the following day. There was what Bruce called a 'Gloat' talk in which the competition was dissected by the captain and coaches. Praise was given to the teams, though rather muted, though this may have been due to the coaches' training method. Louis Gravelle (1977), who studied the way in which the University of

Alberta swimmers were coached, describes how the coach interacted with his student swimmers. There were instructions given as verbal statements about what to do and how to do it, and also commands given as verbal directives. When socializing with the students the coach would smile, pat, embrace, hug, joke and make comments about the student's socio-economic state. There would also be a further series of verbal statements, which would inform, instruct, praise and scold, included among which there were often sermons and harangues. At times there would be negative feedback directed at one individual, also face-to-face encounters (Goffman (1967), and verbal challenges to intensify the performance. The coach would be seen to demonstrate how and how not to perform. In the discussion of his research Gravelle concluded that the nature of the practice session often dictated the categories of interaction that the coach used. For example in the sessions where there was continued swimming there were fewer talks, demonstrations and confrontations. Also there was a 'gradual shift from the negative to the positive reinforcement categories as the swimming programme went through its different phases' (1977:333). In the work of Vicky and Bruce there were very many similarities in their methods of coaching to those described by Gravelle. At my dance lessons, where the emphasis was on social dancing, these patterns of teaching would not have been appropriate, though those who went on into serious competition would probably have had similar treatment from their teachers.

The topic of unfairness was an issue that was taken seriously by the dancers and coaches. They were particularly incensed by the way a judge would split up the dancers when there were too many in a heat. He or she would pick them out in such a way that all the good dancers from one university would be in one heat, and the poor dancers from others would be in another, which meant in fact that some of the better dancers did not get through to the next heat. It was felt by all, that he did it deliberately to the disadvantage of certain universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College. Bruce stated that Oxford showed their true skill by overcoming this in spite of the odds stacked against them.

Back at the rehearsal venue the dancers started to dance again, watched by the team captain and coaches. Certain dancers were asked to dance with people with whom they did not normally dance. After much discussion the nucleus of the A team was formed. There could not be an end result because there had been some confusion about who could be at these trials, and some people who were eligible were not there. Another discussion took place about the particular dancing required

for the Varsity match. In the Varsity match unlike in the other university competitions the dancers have to be good 'all- rounders' in dance, inasmuch as they have to dance their preference, which might for example be the Latin style, but they have to dance the Ballroom style as well. In the other university competitions the dancers can choose what style they wish to dance in and do not have to do both styles. As a result of this it is better to dance reasonably well in both styles rather than necessarily excelling in one.

The Next Varsity Match

In discussion with the team it was agreed that I would come and just watch the match as a spectator. The match was held at a different venue, another college within the university. Appearing to be part of the audience gave me the opportunity to talk in a casual manner with the Oxford students in their home territory. One of the subjects I mentioned again was that of gender. Several of the women were asked 'How do you feel about the men leading in the dance, that is, appearing to dominate and be in control when you dance ' and the most common response was that this was not an important issue for them in this context. The feeling was that if you have a good partner there is a mutual bonding in which the thought of leading is not important: somehow the man is able to tell what his partner would like to do, or does best. During practice what became apparent was how one relates to one's dancing partner. The women felt that if there was no trust or confidence in the partner, the dancing would not go well. There was slightly different response from the men: they agreed about the trust and confidence aspects but also said they liked to think that the women did not feel that they were being led. These responses were rather interesting, (see Appendix A) as these young women are very competitive in the world of studies and are quite ambitious, and whereas the men also are, they are somehow less self-conscious about domineering than are the female dancers.

During this event the dancers seemed much more relaxed and yet at the same time more assured. It became apparent that they were now becoming more confident and also dancing quite well. Before too long it was apparent that, in spite of all their misgivings about how well Cambridge would do in the Varsity match, they were going to win. I was told during the competition that one of the best male dancers, one who was extremely popular, would be the next team captain. This too seemed to help to raise the team spirits.

The Cambridge team members came to speak to me and I realized that I was coming to be quite well known on the university circuit. At the previous competition some of the team had teased me about the rather informal clothes I wore at the competitions: these were usually clothes for comfort, where it did not matter if I sat on the floor or wherever there was space. This time I had brought along a long skirt and top and when the dancers changed into their more formal dress I changed into them as a gesture to the team. What I did not realise was that they had planned to ask me to present the prizes and had hoped that I would be dressed more formally. Since at the previous match that had been done by the Sports Minister, I felt quite honoured that they had asked me. It was a role that I had not performed in years and I found myself making at times some most unoriginal comments to the winners. Without exception the Oxford dancers on receiving their trophies from me, thanked me for my interest and support for the team and kissed me on the cheek. I had not been expecting this and had wondered during my fieldwork in what light they saw my role. The dancers told me that I was always there listening but not necessarily commenting on what they said, and on the few occasions that I was not at the competitions they missed me. These statements may have been made because they knew that my fieldwork with them was nearly at an end. I did feel nevertheless that they had all been very pleasant and helpful, and hoped I had fulfilled my role as a researcher with decorum and sensitivity.

After Bruce had initially discussed with the team about some trophies being missing, and then later in informal discussion with the dancers, I realized that one thing the team needed was a trophy for the best dancers in the B team. As the team had been reluctant to have a donation for the refreshments for the party, I asked if they would like a trophy and they seemed delighted with the idea. It was agreed that during the next academic year they would let me know what they wanted inscribed on it and I would return once more to Oxford to present it to the team. The new team captain and I would be in touch about this. Eventually it was agreed that the trophy I would present for the best dancers in the B team should be called the Gwen Nurse Trophy. (This was the team's decision, not mine.)

I arranged that I should visit Oxford when there was a home match. When I got there I noticed quite a few changes in the teams, for example quite a number of the previous A team dancers had now obtained their degrees. Of the ones I knew well many had changed partners. Nick, who was the new Captain, had more or less completed his doctoral thesis, and was no longer eligible to dance for the A team and

would therefore be dancing for the B team. As it turned out he and his partner won the best dancers in B team trophy that evening, and he was delighted. It seemed to be an arrangement with which all the dancers were now quite happy.

One of the couples came and told me that they were now engaged to be married. During their discussion about the wedding reception, they said that it would be at the Randolph Hotel and they told me that they had chosen there especially because it had such a wonderful ballroom. They felt that this would allow everyone who wished to, to dance the evening away. I commented that I noticed that they were no longer dancing with each other in the competition. It was interesting what they said about the process of courtship and dancing. As previously stated, when they first started in the team she had been the dancer and she persuaded him to dance too, but at the beginning they did not dance together as dance partners. When the relationship became more serious they asked to dance together and did so. Now that they are getting married and coming towards the end of their studies they are quite happy not to dance so much together. In fact they commented that she is a much better Latin dancer, and he is better at the Ballroom style, so they now feel that in many ways the coaches were correct about their dancing with others in the competitions, but when they were first courting dancing was such an important part of their lives that they did not want to dance with anyone else.

Again the Oxford team was doing very well in competition. Vicky and Bruce were much more satisfied with their performance than they had been the previous year and felt that if it continued this way they would probably win anything they tackled. Being in the audience and watching I could see this, but also felt rather a stranger now and as though I had quite a different role as a spectator. It was acknowledged that I had finished my field- work with the team but would get in touch after I had submitted my thesis. Meanwhile I have noticed an article about the team in *Dance News*. The Oxford University team won the Inter-continental Varsity Championships. Seventeen of their students went to Daytona Beach, Florida, where they beat eleven other Varsity teams from the UK, USA and Canada. This event, organised by the United States Amateur Dancing Association, had many outstanding names in the world of dance competition present; they were there to demonstrate and hold workshops for the dancers and coaches. Since returning from the United States the Oxford team had been training to defend their titles; out of 24 trophies that they competed for they had won 23 (unauthored article, *Dance News*, 21st February 2002).

My field -work with the Oxford University teams was, in spite of some technical problems, the most interesting and satisfying of what I did towards this thesis. This I feel maybe was partly to do with working with research students; they were quite articulate and at the same time understood the nature of research. Once they overcame their misgivings as to what I was doing and began to understand my research and my research methods, they became quite enthusiastic and as long as I did not disturb them during competitions, that is, things went very well provided that though they could come to me I was expected not to talk to them or in any other way interrupt their concentration while they were actively competing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Blackpool – The Dance Festival

The Dance Festival at Blackpool constitutes a world of difference from the previous competitive venues. Whereas the previous competitions were for local dancers and among amateurs this event is for international and professional dancers. It is the apogee of the world of CBD – a place where standards and styles are set. It is looked up to by the amateur world and its effects trickle down to it.

My observations and experiences at Blackpool were, and were intended to be, in many ways in stark contrast to those during my association with the Oxford teams. The social contrasts might appear to constitute the most salient difference, though the two worlds did to some extent overlap; the parallel learning processes meant that an academic element was present in both, and the emic responses of participants were unsurprisingly similar. Perhaps where the two situations were especially different was in the part played by the history of CBD. This was almost negligible in the Oxford case, whereas in order to comprehend Blackpool's significance to CBD an historical approach is essential.

Blackpool: the Dance Festival and its Setting

During the eighteenth century the fashion for 'taking the waters' extended from being centred only at mineral spas and hot springs, mostly inland and valued mainly for their curative properties, to include places, other than ports, along the shoreline. The democratisation of leisure, which came about during the second half of the nineteenth century led to the development of such seaside resorts at a commercial level, and by the 1870s Blackpool, a seaside town in Lancashire, had become a popular centre. At first it catered mainly to the middle and working classes of nearby towns, but as other resorts strove to maintain their exclusivity it began to attract working people from further afield. Towards the end of the Victorian era the great pleasure-palaces, the Tower and the Winter Gardens, were constructed, followed by the technology of the Pleasure Beach. In the early twentieth century Blackpool had become probably the most popular resort in Europe and the world's first specialized working-class holiday venue. The Blackpool authorities had long been using publicity to promote this - the famous Illuminations were initiated as long ago as 1912. Better-off visitors were and are still catered for, but the main source of prosperity for the town comes from the welcome it extends to the relatively poorer people of England

and industrial Scotland. Some of the principal consequences of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Blackpool plays a central part for the CBD fraternity. Before going on to a full description of The Dance Festival and its significance to Blackpool I ought give a short account of the background of the Festival. Much of the information that follows has been gleaned from a booklet, which is no longer available (P. J. S. Richardson, n.d.). The author was one of the proprietors of the *Dancing Times*, the oldest of all monthly magazine devoted to dancing. In 1956 the ballroom and social dancing sections were split off to form the *Ballroom Dancing Times*.

The first Blackpool Dance Festival was held in Easter Week, April 6th - 9th, 1920. It did not take place in 1928 and after having taken place in 1940 was suspended during the rest of the Second World War years (1941-1945), since when it has been held every year. For many years prior to 1920 Blackpool was the playground of the whole of the North of England, and 'Of all the attractions none was more enticing or more popular than the dancing' (Richardson 1950: 3). These were the days before Palais de Dance had been thought of, and such great ballrooms as those in Blackpool, the Empress (at the Winter Gardens) and the Tower, were unique in the country. These ballrooms catered, as the Palais de Danse later did, essentially for the general public, and at that period the favoured dances were the old-time waltz, the square dance and, above all, the Novelty or Sequence Dance. As late as 1919, the year before the Festival started, the list of eleven dances, which with their encores made up the evening programme, consisted of three waltzes, three Lancers, a foxtrot, a two-step and three novelty dances.

Each summer the resident Masters of Ceremonies at the Tower and the Empress would introduce a new novelty dance – generally of their own composition. This was always simple enough for it to be picked up by the crowd after a few minutes' demonstration. This dance would be featured each night. Most of these dances soon passed into limbo and were forgotten, and only two have remained in the dance repertoire: these are the Veleta, and the Military Two-step. Most of the Dance Teachers' Associations, apart from The Imperial Society, supported the Dance Festival when it was inaugurated in 1920.

It was during the next ten years that ragtime music came from the USA and set in motion a great interest in the modern dance; many Palais de Danse were established

and following on from this was the inauguration of the Dance Festival. At first there were several styles of dance with no set patterns; however later the foxtrot, the quickstep, waltz, tango and the blues involved a different style of dance, now known as the 'English Style'. Harry Smith- Hampshire (2002) discusses how Frank Borrows, dance historian and ex-President of the National Association of Teachers of Dance, said that from the 1920s to the 1930s came the rejection of the turned out foot and the five positions of ballet (as employed in the Sequence dances) and the substitution of the parallel feet of natural walking. The development of this new non-sequence dancing required the man to 'lead' and the woman 'to follow'. Smith- Hampshire claims that this was the start of and what became internationally acclaimed as the 'English Style', which swept the country. Later, in 1945, the Latin-American dancers were also included and today the programme of the Festival is almost entirely based on a modern version of the 'English Style'. (Rust, 1969) The organizers of the Festival still turn to their old supporters the Associations today, particularly in the matters of adjudicators, stewards and other officials.

1920 - 1927

Though the Festival appears to have arisen originally out of the demand for novelty dancing, the first Festival in 1920 had only three dance competitions: the waltz, the two-step and the fox-trot. A day was devoted to each dance. Each entrant had to submit a written description of his or her dance and a copy of the required music. In the morning each entrant, with a partner, came into the Empress Ballroom and demonstrated the dance to the adjudicators. The only other persons present were the pianist and the Festival Secretary. After all the dancers had been seen, four or five would be summoned for a second viewing, and the three judged most expert would be chosen in the early evening. Then they would explain their dances to the assembled teachers, and later in the evening these would be displayed before and taught to the general public. This happened each day, and then on the fourth night there would be a public ball in the Empress Ballroom at which the first three prize-dances would be shown. This routine, with slight variations, was followed until 1926. For a time there was some expansion, with the inclusion of stage, country and even Morris dancing, but the country-dance section was dropped after two years. In 1927, possibly owing to a change of management, it was announced that there would be no Festival. *The Dancing Times* at its own expense arranged an alternative event at Scarborough. The novelty dance section was eventually dropped and was never again to be revived.

1929-1940

After another change of management at the Winter Gardens Company, it was decided to reinstate the Dance Festival at Blackpool but to confine it in 1929 to competitions other than those held at Scarborough. In 1931 the Festival ceased to be merely a northern affair and became a truly national event and one of the highest importance to British competitive dancing. The whole Winter Gardens was remodelled, and two new events were initiated - the British Amateur and British Professional Championships, each of which was open not only to British dancers but to the world. High-sounding as these titles may have appeared at the time, they are now recognised as signalling the results at the premier event in the international ballroom dancing world.

For the Amateur event preliminary events were held at about forty District Finals. Winners of these were awarded the right to dance at Blackpool in the Grand Finals, a procedure followed every year until 1939. The heats increased in number and certain Continental championships came to be recognised on the same level as District Finals for Blackpool. Many couples came from the Continent and regular announcements of the winners of the competitions were made in radio broadcasts. The Festival continued until 1940 when it closed down for 6 years.

It restarted in 1946 but did not immediately get back fully into its stride. 'Though the programme was less than full, the spectator support was considerable, with people being turned away from the door' (Hallewell 1979: 23). The following year saw the Festival back to its full week of dance competitions. In 1948 came the holding of what was to be the first of a series of World Ballroom Congresses. There were over three hundred subscribers, not only from the UK and the Republic of Ireland but also such European countries as Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, France, Italy, Switzerland and Finland, as well as from as far away as Australia and Ceylon. (Hallewell, 1979: 26). An ambitious preliminary programme filled a full week before the Dance Festival proper got under way. There were lectures, and demonstrations of dance steps, which were shown to teachers, who in turn took them back to their dance schools. This continues up to the present, and is run partly in conjunction with the Dance Festival proper.

In the 1960s Latin American dances were introduced. Throughout the years there have been changes in the dance competitions depending on the current popularity of

certain events. In recent times the competitions, spread over nine consecutive days, are for:

- Rising Stars Latin
- Senior Modern
- Under 21 years Latin
- Amateur Latin
- Rising Stars Modern
- Senior Latin
- Under 21 years Modern
- Amateur Modern
- Professional Latin
- Professional Modern

Most of the categories are self-explanatory, though two of them may call for further clarification. 'Senior' status applies to couples who are aged 35 and over. 'Rising Stars' is a category used to define couples who have newly turned professional and who could begin to find their first ratings in the field. This category has attracted a lot of non-British competitors and gives them the chance to compete against the less highly ranked dancers. The definition of who can enter this category is, that it is open to the world with the exception of those competitors who had reached the finals of the British Professionals the previous year, and those who had danced all four dances in the semi-final (Hallewell 1979:163).

When I was at the Blackpool Festival in 1999, Mrs Gillian MacKenzie, the organiser of the Festival, kindly gave me a summary of the statistics for the competitions. There were dancers from 49 countries. The total number of couples was 1601, of which 183 were from Britain and 1420 were from abroad. The totals for the previous 10 years showed that there has been a sharp rise from 1998, when the total had been 845 couples. Out of these dancers in 1999 there were 35 British Professionals and 148 Amateurs, 479 Foreign Professionals and 941 Amateurs. Over seven days they danced a total of 2418 dances, these being the heats leading up to the finals as well as two invitation events.

Interviewing Mr Hallewell

Kit Hallewell, MBE, was staying in the same hotel as I. He was now 89 but had previously been a champion dancer with his wife: they had danced for England as

amateurs. He had also written a book about his impressions of the Blackpool Festival of Dance. He said he would be delighted to be interviewed, although he did not want me to use a tape recorder. He told me he had a special interest in the actual techniques of ballroom dancing and had written articles on this for the *Dancing Times*. Commenting on ballroom dancing nowadays, he said that it has 'traditional styles and techniques', whereas in Latin American it seemed to him that 'anything goes'. He also remarked that the foxtrot is the 'dance expression of the British genius for understatement.'

In his opinion ballroom dancing as it is known today only emerged in the 1920s, when an *ad hoc* council was set up to codify standards, steps, and techniques of the waltz, foxtrot, quickstep, and tango (as a separate step, not a standard). In 1931 the competition opened as the 'British Amateur, British Professional ...Open to the World' and was granted official recognition. During the 1920s, much of the interest in this form of dance was stimulated by such people as a former army officer, who was exceedingly handsome and who taught ladies to dance. He and others taught in so-called 'café society' and at tea dances. By 1924 an invasion had occurred of such dances as the tango from Paris, and 'tango teas' became a common feature in café society. Ballrooms such as the Hammersmith Palais, described by him as a 'temple of ballroom dancing', were being built, and others were being established in the interiors of already fashionable buildings. The elite place for dancing was the Empress Rooms at the Royal Knightsbridge Hotel, where all the top male professional dancers could be booked as dance escorts. There were Palais de Dance halls in Manchester, Birmingham and a number of other cities. From the one in Nottingham, bands broadcast on the radio every Saturday evening. Only two groups of Palais survived after the war: these were the Hammersmith Palais and the Mecca Halls.

He also told me about the 'pen pros', men who sat in boxes at the side of the dance-hall, and were hired out at 6 pence per dance. In the USA this was the source of the once popular tune 'Ten Cents a Dance'. One of the best-known personalities in the dance world was Alex Warren, who eventually came to own the Albert Ballroom in Glasgow. He originally danced as a 'pen pro' in Blackpool, and later became one of the judges. Mr Hallewell went on to discuss the history of Blackpool. Much of what he told me agreed with what I have written above and helped to authenticate the impartiality of Richardson's account. He felt that the Festival had become even more popular than it had been previously, and he knew that the tickets for the current event

could have been sold many times over. By now there has been the emergence on to the scene of Italy and the growing interest from Eastern Europe, which has added considerably to the demand for tickets.

The interview ended with Mr Hallewell discussing his principal other interests, writing and poetry. On returning to Blackpool the following year I met him again. He realised that I had gained more knowledge, and we talked about a variety of topics, including the 'pen pros'. I was anxious to know if any of them were still alive; but as far as his knowledge went they had all died. I asked about his book, and as he had bought along a couple for sale I was able to buy one. After this he met me daily, sometimes joining me at breakfast. and although I did not actively encourage this, it did mean that, should he not have accompanied me on the walk home the previous evening, it gave us the opportunity to discuss the previous night's dancing.

The Dance Festival

The Setting

Queues of people were waiting for return tickets at the box office. There are 3800 tickets, which cost £134 each, for a reserved seat for a week. The 'Rover ticket', costing £85 for the week, entitles one to daily entrance to the ballroom and to the activities within the area. Usually during the earlier competitions in the afternoon it is possible to get a seat, but not in the evening.

On entering the concourse one notices the entrance to the two Convention Halls where the Congress is held on the first Saturday. During the week, while the dancers are qualifying for the more advanced dances, committee meetings of the various dance federations, as well as the committees for Blackpool and other International Dance Events, are held in the Convention Halls. Further along the concourse is The Opera House, where variety programmes are shown in the summer and pantomimes in the winter. At the far end is the Empress Ballroom area. 'Every sophisticated city once boasted a retinue of grand ballrooms for public dancing. Now only a handful survive, and few approach the grandeur of Blackpool's famed Winter Gardens' (Reynolds, 1988:44). When one enters the ballroom there is no doubt that it is impressive, if only for its size and grandeur. One goes down the stairs to the floor of the ballroom, which has seating on all sides except where the stage is. On either side of the stage are passages out of which the competitors come on to the dance floor. Behind the stage are dressing- rooms for all competitors come on to the dance

floor, and members can also enter. If privacy is required the dancer will often go into the cubicles in the public toilets

The dance spectators are not numerous during the day, most of those present then being dancers and their supporters. In the evening the Ballroom is absolutely full, but it is possible for those with a Rover ticket to find a seat during the day. Towards the end of the week every corner of the ballroom is crammed with people. The dancers do not pay to enter the competitions but have to have a ticket of admission to the Ballroom. As these tickets are so carefully vetted, it is unlikely that non-dancers, or those not known to the dancing fraternity, would be able to enter the competitions, although that would be possible if there was an abundance of tickets. I discussed this with one of the dancers, who told me that most would find it too expensive to enter if they had not reached a certain standard, since then it was likely not to be long before they would be disqualified.

A Senior dancer, a woman from San Francisco, told me that even though she knows that she will never win a competition, just to dance in the Empress Ballroom is for her 'a fantastic and magic event'. She felt it was the space there is to dance in, and the whole atmosphere of being there, which, in spite of having danced in many places throughout the world, she did not find anywhere else. This is a claim that I heard quite frequently made for Blackpool, and one which it is difficult for any flat description of the place and the goings-on there to substantiate; yet when one is there at the appropriate time it is easy enough to understand.

Upstairs there is a balcony, which has seats on three sides of the Ballroom. In the middle of it, facing the stage, is an area where cameras can be placed to video the performers. Only three official photographers are permitted there; all others are relegated to spectator status, no matter who they are, or what media they represent. Media passes for photographers and writers are actively discouraged. No popular press vehicle will tolerate such restrictions, and Reynolds suggests that this may be why 'Blackpool and all that it represents is not only ignored but even ridiculed in some media quarters.' (1998: 152). Television cameras at the Festival are there only to record selected events, and none of these is released to the television networks. Reynolds fears that refusing to compromise the Festival's tradition and prestige in return for media coverage may be self-defeating. It should also be noted, that no cameras brought by competitors and audience are allowed to be used.

Coming down the stairs another door on the right-hand side of the Ballroom takes one to an area where there is a restaurant, opened especially for the Festival, with a bar area included. Leading off from the eating facilities is a door, which leads to the exhibition and sales area. The total exhibition/sales area, which is rented by the dance suppliers, is four thousand square meters in size, the same as the actual Ballroom dance floor. This is where are represented the business companies that supply the dancers with products ranging from evening gowns and suits to shoes, make-up and accessories. The most forceful promoters of ballroom-based products are companies specialising in dance music on CDs and dance performances and lessons on video- tapes. This music is an essential element for dancers, especially as the sort of music they require is rarely to be found on contemporary mainstream labels. Tracks are identified by the name of the dance to be performed and include the beats per minute, played by an orchestra well known to ballroom fans. Very little of this music contains vocals. Dancers on the whole concentrate on steady rhythms and sweeping melodies, avoiding the intrusion of lyrics and piercing voices. In this area one finds many people seated listening in deep concentration on the individual earphones provided by the company. Nearby is an area where several videos are playing. These are mostly of current professional champions showing how to perform certain dances. There is also quite a demand for these videos, especially from dancers from abroad.

Another booth/stall bought and sold second-hand competition clothes. This was very popular with the top amateurs and less well-off professionals, because by making use of it couples were able to appear to have a more extensive wardrobe than they actually possessed. The female partner could wear the dress once or twice and then exchange it at the stall for a new one, and no one would know. The most expensive dresses I saw were a ball gown costing £1000.00 and a 'Latin' dress for £600.00. A man's suit averaged about £500.00. The woman in charge was a South African who collects unwanted dance clothes and shoes in her spare time, in particular from top professionals who no longer want them and, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, takes them back to Soweto where she gives them to young CBD dancers. This type of dancing has become one of the most popular activities in the "townships", large settlements of mainly Black people adjoining the cities in South Africa.

Most of the other booths and stalls sold clothes and also other accessories used in the construction of 'the Look'. Typical of the salespeople was an Austrian professional dancer who also sells the rhinestones used for the dancers' dresses as

well as for jewellery. Other stallholders were an American couple who come to the Festival every year and have been supplying jewellery to dance sport events since 1939. They introduced me to Michael Miller, a most interesting man who was born in February 1908 and has been a dance instructor and performer, a language teacher, a track athlete, and a commercial photographer. He is now a dance video producer. Every year since 1988 he has come to Blackpool to video the Dance Congress. He remarked that dancing can become an obsession, and consequently many people devote a great deal of time and energy to trying to perfect their techniques and get everything just right.

The owner of another small company, from Germany, sold tanning products and stated that her business was very successful. She specializes in particular in a cheaper tanning product, which has a temporary effect and may not necessarily be used for long term dancing, and another which gradually builds up in the body and is used for the more strenuous dances - this product does not come off when the dancer is sweating, unlike the former. She also supplies an anti-slip powder used on shoes during practice and performance.

The overall impression from this sales area was that the dancers were on a spending spree. If the sales people were to be believed, it was a very successful and profitable time for them, and made the trouble and expense of coming to Blackpool well worthwhile.

The Festival Itself

These days the Festival is held over nine days, starting on the Friday of the May Bank Holiday and finishing on the Saturday of the following week. In the morning the ballroom is closed to give the dancers the chance to practice. At 1pm the doors are opened in order to let them in to get ready for the competitions. At 2pm the judges are introduced and come on to the floor, the women usually wearing long skirts and jackets and the men formal dark suits. They are then positioned on all sides of the dance floor.

The routines are much the same at each Festival; the statistics and such particulars change very little. What happened in 1999 may be taken as typical. The dancing started with the British Professional 'Rising Stars' Latin Competition. There were 245 couples entered to dance the cha-cha-cha, samba, rumba and paso doble. They danced in ten heats, although the couples who had reached the fourth and fifth

rounds of the competition from the previous year did not need to dance heats one and two. Normally the dance heats last under two minutes and the judges have to finish up with six couples at the end of the day. If a couple is not known to the judges, they have to rely on 'the Look' to make themselves both conspicuous and attractive. Their clothing is often the first thing they think of, but sometimes the more striking this is the less acceptable it becomes, and in the final rounds it is more the presence, performance and technique that are taken into consideration. Some judges have commented that technique is not of prime importance, since if a couple gets to the finals at Blackpool it may be assumed that their technique has reached a desirable standard. Beyond the technique of the dancers they are looking for originality of interpretation and performance skills, which will please the judges and audience alike and yet still adhere to rules laid down by the dancing associations.

These dances are interspersed with general dancing and also the 'Senior Modern' Competitions. The programme for the 'Rising Stars Latin' competitions on the first day was that dancing started at 2.05 pm. When this heat was over, then came 'General Dancing', followed by the 'Senior Modern'. This is the pattern which continues, repeated seven times until some time after 12.30 am, when the prizes are presented for the last six couples. In the early afternoon couples dance to taped music, then as the day continues they dance alternately to the famous Blackpool Wurlitzer organ and to the Irven Tidswell Empress Ballroom Orchestra. Uniquely to Blackpool the competitors are called back to the dance floor by the organ and the orchestra playing octaves of the note G in concert.

'General dancing' is a feature that I have noted as occurring at all the dance competitions I have attended. For this popular event to take place the 'sacred' space of the competition area is opened to whoever wishes to participate. Particularly in Blackpool this looks like a form of dance egalitarianism, because everyone, whether a world champion or a young spectator, is equally entitled for a while to dance on the usually sacrosanct floor. Partners for this sometimes come together at random and relatively informally. This normally goes on while the invigilators are collating the marks in a room at the side of the stage. For those not entering the competitions, such as past champions and young hopefuls, this can be very exciting.

The other competitions on the first day were for the Senior Ballroom dancers. These would be the older dancers, some of whom would have reached a certain standard but did not expect to win. Some of the dancers in this category were excellent and

well known to the audiences, largely because they might be those who had reached the age when they would no longer be able to dance in the main events.

Nevertheless, many of the top professional dancers tend to retire before getting to this stage. The Senior dancers often wore floating dresses, which covered them up more than some of the younger styles would have, and in quite a few cases it was clear that their appearance overall ended up being rather more severe. They seemed to be enjoying themselves despite having lost some of the fluidity of the dance.

There were 174 couples who had entered for the 'British Senior Modern' competitions. They danced in eight heats in a manner similar to that which had taken place in the "Rising Stars Latin" competitions, also continuing until about 12.30 am.

The following day was the day for the young Latin dancers, who really went for a dance style in which 'anything goes'. These were young dancers, under 21, from all over the world, who essentially wanted to show off. Some of their clothes were quite outrageous, as if they were deliberately wearing as little as they could. The judges appeared to get rather angry with them, and it looked as though the feeling among some of the officials was that they were not keeping strictly to the rules. An example of this is when a couple might see some supporters and rather than carry on going around the dance floor in a clockwise direction, as is the rule, they would backtrack to perform another few steps to arouse their supporters, this could mean that the couple behind them would then have to alter their steps and could even cause problems for other couples who were following on. On the other hand the original couple often had a great many supporters in the audience, probably mainly those who were not in the same heats, and so they and their supporters enjoyed a lot of enthusiasm, which was aroused during these competitions. One could detect parallels with those parts of the film *Strictly Ballroom* when the young dancers are experimenting with what they can do and the older fraternity are not pleased about what they see. Needless to say it was the couples who conformed to the laid-down steps who won.

There was quite a delay during one of the starting heats of this competition, and it soon became clear that the cause of the delay lay among the Italian dancers. One of these in particular was quite agitated: when their numbers were called the male of one couple had entered but not the female. Eventually she came on but did not look happy with her partner. Her friends tried cheering her on, but at the end of the dance she stormed off, shouting at her partner although there had not been anything conspicuously wrong with his performance. It later transpired that she had just found

out that her partner was sleeping with her male trainer, who also happened to be her father. In a later heat she was dancing with him once more, and the conflict appeared to have been resolved. Among those who enter these competitions there seemed to be quite a number of homosexual men, and perhaps also women, though it was not possible, and probably would not be necessary or desirable, to confirm this.

On the Saturday the programme was slightly different. There was only one competition as such, which was for the 'British Amateur Under 21 Years Latin'. There were 228 couples entered and they danced in 10 heats. The dancing started at 4pm and went on until 12.30 in the morning. These dances also were interspersed with 'General Dancing' throughout the day. However, at 9.30 pm there came what is known as the 'International Invitation Professional Team Match'. This consisted of a captain and four couples, two dancing Modern and the other two Latin. The countries represented were Germany, Italy, the USA and Great Britain. These teams had been rehearsing in the morning, and this was the reason why the dancing started later. Each country danced ten dances in all.

While the Under 21 Latin heats were going on the World Congress had started in the Spanish Hall. Each year, the Congress is sponsored by a different, rotating, Dance Society. In 1999, it was by the World Dance Sport Council and the British Dance Council. The main thing that happens at the Congress is that professional couples are invited by the host organization to demonstrate their own particular ways of doing a certain dance. They may then introduce a new step into the repertoire and teach volunteers from the audience, who are often teachers from abroad, how to do it. Among the dances that were examined were the cha cha cha, the waltz, the rumba, the jive, and the tango. Other topics discussed were how to produce juvenile and junior champions and the art of exhibition dancing. Members of the dance federations who are not able to be at the Congress have details of these steps sent to their dance studios.

At 9.30 pm the International Team match was held, and this was in effect a caricature of competitive dancing, with the top dancers imitating well-known dance personalities and highlighting certain eccentricities within the ballroom dance world. The German team, for example, chose to look at how competitive dance might be affected by the Olympics: instead of winning on the grounds of style, technique and performance, the first couple to reach the far end of the ballroom would win. The American team gave a very glitzy performance, rather a la Ziegfield follies. The Italians decided in view of

world conservation they wanted to ban feathers but did it all in quite a comic way. The British team chose to pick up on all the eccentricities of the older and famous world class competitors and lampoon them. The British team won, which is usual in this Festival, although in fairness they probably were as good as any. The audience dresses up for this event, mostly wearing evening or semi-evening clothes, and as the week progresses people become more and more formal in their clothes.

At the end of this session the world champions, Karen and Marcus Hilton, formally announced their retirement from competitive dancing. The whole ballroom became ecstatic. For over 25 minutes people cheered, stood up and stamped their feet. I have heard nothing but praise for this couple, the most common remarks being that 'they are such wonderful dancers' and 'they have no side to them and are friendly and polite to everyone no matter who they are.' These I would say are probably the highest compliments that can be given to the dancers, and squares with what Helena Wulff (1998) says about ballet dancers, that manners are very important in the world of ballet. There, and on the floor in CBD, consideration for one's fellow-dancers far outweighs any grasp at prominence at the expense of others. Another mark of respect from the dance world for the Hiltons is that in their speciality, the quick step, a certain type of kick-step has now been included in the dance repertoire and is called the "Hilton Kick". Marcus in his retirement speech, and on several occasions earlier, showed great concern for and politeness to his wife. He also deferred to his dancing teachers with a great deal of respect.

This was also the case with the couple who would later on in the week become their successors. Luca and Lorraine Barricchi, an Italian-born man, with an English-born wife, both dance for England. He kept on talking about his lovely wife, and how much he wanted to protect her. He felt that it was important that he should lead her well, keep her away from the possible dangers on the dance floor. It has been mentioned earlier how this point was stressed in the Japanese film *Shall We Dance*. No doubt there are similar concerns in other forms of dance such as ballet, where the quantity of physical control required is still greater. This is a matter not so much of ritual or even the conventions of performance as of etiquette and trust.

At 1.30am the prizes were presented, after which should one wish to leave there were a number of dance activities one could go on to. For example, one of the nightclubs had sent along a small Latin musical group, plus people on stilts, who then led many of the young dancers in a conga-style dance to the club, where they

danced for several hours. Those with transport could go on to venues in the large hotels in the outskirts of the town for continued dance exhibitions and social dancing. At my hotel some of the foreign judges had got together over a drink. They knew who I was, but declined to speak to me. I constantly received the impression that they thought I was a journalist posing as an anthropologist, poised to say bad things about them, and even felt quite threatened by my presence.

On the Sunday there were no competitions. In the morning the ballroom was taken over by the World Congress. There were three lectures concentrating on choreography, one on the samba and another on paso doble, and lastly on dance in general. Others lectured on such topics as putting the 'show' into show dance, the lady's role in ballroom dancing, the three controlling factors in dance, that is, balance, timing and muscular control, and the men's role in the Latin dance. Finally Karen and Marcus Hilton discussed 'the magic of the dance' which is discussed more fully later on. As on the previous day all the dances were illustrated by top dance professionals and the audience on most occasions was invited to learn the new steps. The Congress finished at 5.30. People were then invited to go to the nearby main Anglican church, to a service held to celebrate the dance event and commemorate dancers who had died during the previous year.

At 8pm people who had been allotted tickets, as I had, were invited to a reception given by the Mayor of Blackpool in another part of the Ballroom complex. Once the formalities were over, there was once again an International Gamesmanship display, during which fun was made of various famous names and events in the CBD world. Some of this could be quite biting and verge on the malicious: one famous British dancer was seen in tears when they mocked his break-up with his long-standing dance partner. Interestingly enough, it was the captain of the Italian team who went over to comfort him. This reception was no doubt intended for the inner circle of the dance world, and I, as an outsider, felt greatly privileged to be allowed to see what was going on. However this access to a back stage of the professional dance world did not come very often and did not form a major part of my work.

The following week the competition pattern was much the same as on the previous Friday. On the Monday it was the turn of the 'Professional Rising Stars' competition. There were 300 couples entered, who started the dance in 13 heats, commencing at 3.15 and going on until after 1am. Also being danced was the 'Senior Latin Championship' Seventy-three couples had entered for this, and there were four

starting heats in all. This competition did not start until after 7pm and, like the 'Rising Stars', it finished in the early morning. As there were so many couples entered in the 'Amateur Latin' competition - over 300 - their competition, that is the first two starting heats, were danced on the Monday morning followed by 12 more on the Tuesday morning, afternoon and evening. Among the competitors were two very good dancers whom I had come to know when they danced for Imperial College. They had entered the Amateur Latin Dance event, and I met them when they were preparing to rehearse. As I was leaving them, I heard someone calling my name. This turned out to be a member of the former Cambridge team. He and his girlfriend were there to support and advise my friends. Subsequently we agreed as to their technical excellence but agreed that there was something lacking in their performance.

Unlike some of the other dancers, the couple I knew were much more serious in their style of dance and in their appearance. It must be admitted that their clothing also was quite scant, but it was designed to show off the dance itself rather than just the body, as was generally the case with the clothes of the other dancers. The couple's technique was excellent, but it became clear that they were not performing to the satisfaction of the audience and the judges. It felt as though they knew that they were good and somehow that it was for themselves that they were perfecting their skills. As far as performance was concerned, in this case playing to the audience, they somehow seemed to lack charisma. During their heats this was completely corroborated by the people I was with. Later one of the dancers I knew from the Oxford events told me that his teachers have been saying something similar to him but he does not wish to change. This competition had a large number of entrants from all over the world, was very popular with the audiences, and reached quite a high standard of dancing. Most of Monday and part of Tuesday were devoted to the amateur Latin competitions, but also dancing on the Tuesday were the 'Under 21 years Ballroom dancers', 158 couples in total who danced in eight starting heats.

On the Wednesday it was the turn of the 'Amateur Ballroom' competitors, who would dance two starting heats in the morning and, as there were 295 couples competing, the remaining 11 starting heats on Thursday. Also dancing were the Professional Latin competitors, 263 couples having entered, and for them there were 11 starting heats. Interposed in this at 9.40 was a 'Modern Formation' competition. This is for teams of six to eight couples; there were two teams, one from the Netherlands and the other from the USA. The whole of Thursday was devoted to the Amateur

Ballroom dance competitions, apart from an hour when, at 9.35, six professional dancers were invited to take part in a dance exhibition competition.

Later on the Senior Latin dancers came on, and as several dancers remarked, somehow seeing older men and women doing Latin dancing wearing skimpy clothes and youthfully flashy accessories was not pleasant. This style of dancing seems best suited to younger bodies, as for example the clothing worn is designed to show the movements of the individual body parts used to interpret the various Latin rhythms, but this in its turn can also reveal any extra flesh or body marks, which could be obviously associated with the beginning of the ageing process. In addition the contortions of the body needed for this dance are much more difficult for an older body to complete with apparent ease. Unlike the other Latin competitions, this was not nearly so popular with the audiences or the dancers.

On the same day and those following came the Rising Stars Ballroom and the Under 21 Ballroom dancers. As with the Latin competitions, for the Rising Star Ballroom on came a large number of entrants, and it was only when the floor started to clear as the numbers got smaller that one could see the long flowing gowns and suits to advantage. These clothes help to enhance the Look as well as the style of the dancers. It seems there is a prescribed role, insofar as many of these Ballroom dancers are hoping to emulate the 20s and 30s styles as danced by Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. As with the Rising Stars Latin these are the hopefuls who may one day become professional dancers and are very aware of what the judges expect of them. On the whole they adhere to the format stipulated in the rule- books.

When it was the turn of the Professional dancers those who danced first were the Latin ones. These dancers have moved a long way on from the prescribed format and show a great deal of individuality. One world- class couple, who dance for Germany, are very well aware of what appeals to the crowd. The male dancer is outrageously sensual in his movements and often leaves his partner in order to dance specifically to the women in the crowd. His partner is very attractive and is also quite sensual but in rather quieter way than her partner, which is surely more appealing to the men in the audience as well as to the judges. They have been World Champions on several occasions. There was another couple, from Finland, who have also been very successful. Interestingly enough, their routine, unlike that of most of the other top dancers, is much more aligned to the regular dance patterns.

On this point it has to be emphasized that there are no dancers actually from Latin America who compete in, or even attend, these grand dancing competitions. One is inclined to wonder what would happen if they chose to come and dance their 'traditional' dances as they would in South America. For example, from observation of the samba in Brazil and in the United Kingdom the interpretation of how they are danced is very different. Carlinhos de Jesus, one of the top Brazilian samba dancers was quite horrified when he saw a video of how the samba was danced in Europe especially as he claimed that the samba was one of the symbols of Brazilian identity.

The climax of the dance festival is the professional Ballroom competition held on the closing days. Those taking part are the dancers universally considered to be the best. They have very many different styles and those such as Karen and Marcus Hilton have introduced quite a few steps besides the 'Hilton kick'.

The clothes of these dancers have been adapted in such a way as not only to enhance but also to add a 'touch of class' to the dance. Many of these dancers have been sponsored by International companies, such as Chrisanne and Sapiel (its Italian counterpart), as a result no expense has been spared for their clothes. Not only do the dancers put on their finest gear, but the judges and the audience also wear evening dress. Since these dancers are considered the top ones there can be no question about their technique. They are judged on what performance they bring to the floor and how it appeals to the audience and judges. They are dancers who have come through the system, and according to my friends in the audience it is often known even before they come to these dances which of them are likely to be among the winners. The informants feel that they are judged on past form, not necessarily on how they dance at the event and they compared this to competitors in some other varieties of sport such as dance ice- skating, although some of these informants, who previously were dancers, do not agree that CBD is a sport and prefer to see it as an art form.

Friday, the last day of the competitions, is seen by many as the highlight of the Festival and is devoted to 'Professional Ballroom' dancing. Three hundred and fourteen couples entered for this and they had 13 starting heats. The whole of the day was spent on this, apart from a Latin Formation competition at 9 pm. Eight teams had entered, six of which were from England, and an English team won. (It is statistically interesting to note that if the winner had been picked at random the odds in favour of this happening would still have been as high as 3 to 1.)

From a dancer's point of view, what is it like to do well at Blackpool? One of my informants is an amateur dancer who is now a rock 'n roll champion. When I told her I was interested in how it felt to compete and win, she offered to write it down for me.

This is what she wrote:

When me and my partner won the Rock n Roll we saw how many couples we were competing against, and we said lets go for it, lets give them a fright. We had a confidence because of how long we have danced together and we are so confident with our routine. We have a buzz and energy that the other couples do not have and the whole ballroom was shouting our number, which we could not believe. Then once when we had danced we had the wait for the results, and when it comes to your section your heart starts beating that bit faster from the anticipation, and as it gets near you get more excited, then when they call the runners up numbers up, we knew we had won. We were jumping up and down and hugging each other excited and happy yes that we had won it for the second time. Then my cousin and I had a few tears, we tried to compose ourselves then when we went up for the trophies you hear all the people cheering for you. You shake a bit because you can't believe it then you have to smile for the photos. After all that we had to compose ourselves for the official photo, which goes in to the IDTA Dance Teachers magazine, which goes to all the IDTA teachers. We had people come up to us after we had our trophies telling us well done and how they thought we were great, brilliant, that sort of thing.

I think that you can see it was such a roller coaster of emotions but then you can't stop smiling and we kept saying to each other 'Hi champ, we are the nationwide rock 'n roll champions.'

Spectators and judges

How is one to describe the actual dancing from the audience's point of view? As it is for the judges, when the dancers first come on to the floor there are so many couples that in the first few heats, unless one knows particular couples, it is quite difficult to pick out special features of the dance, especially among the less well-known couples. Even on the first day of the competitions the supple bodies and the skill of the dancing lead many in the audience to speculate about who would be the champions of the future. The dancers were also careful, as the heats went on, to dance in areas where they knew that their supporters had congregated: these were often their teachers or fellow students from their dance studios. They would then push a routine to its limit when they saw their friends, who in response would cheer and shout for them wildly, calling attention to them by calling out their number. This would give encouragement to uncommitted spectators to join in the applause. In every competition the dancers would know all the accepted and correct steps for the dances, but there would be much more attention being paid to their performance skills and consideration of the extent to which they could appeal to the judges and audience.

Many people are intrigued to know how judges of ballroom dance competitions decide which of the couples taking part should be awarded the winners' trophy. How do they make their choice? By all accounts at Blackpool the two most important facets of the dancer's performance that have to be assessed are quality and crowd appeal. Quality, it is claimed, is expressed through the dancer's technique, musicality and characterization; crowd appeal depends on the dance's choreography, presentation and personalities and is the main way in which the spectators can influence the judges.

The standard of performance, therefore, is made up of many different elements taken together. Because individuals place a different value on each aspect, their assessments are subjective, so an uneven number of adjudicators are always used for major events. One gained the impression, especially after talking to many people around the ballroom, that the judging was not always impartial. In one person's opinion, 'The judging is political and isn't always the best people who win!' A former World Champion Dancer, English-born and now a judge at most major events, said that 'when dealing with human beings there is bound to be corruption'. This was an unexpected thing for him to say, as he had not been asked any direct questions about possible prejudicial judging. The judging, when looked at from an etic position, rather than using the terms corruption, or political, could perhaps be most aptly described in some of the judgements as much more akin to cronyism. (I have been told by some of the 'insiders' at Cruft's Dog Show that similar judgements may be made there too.)

During the dances I became friendly with two dancers in particular. They know all about the dancers, their styles and so forth, in many ways they are typical of the audiences at these events in Blackpool. They are quite clear in their minds about which dancers are going to win and who will do what, and quite often they are correct in their assumptions. As an outsider one could see this as purely gossip, as not only is the dance talked about but also who is partnering whom off and on the dance floor, but it does surround a certain core of information about means of assessment operating within the CBD world. Marriages, births and deaths also take an important part in their discussions. As a result of this lots of comments on and off the dance floor can be understood as having hidden meanings, and it is only as one becomes familiar with the scene that one fully realizes what is going on.

The second time that I was at the Blackpool Festival I was more aware of some of the more controversial aspects surrounding competitive dancing. I sat next to an older dance couple who had been involved in competitive dancing. The man talked about who would win, using such expressions as, 'these decisions are political, you know'. He would not go into details, but when we were cheering on certain couples who did not win, he would mutter such comments as 'Perhaps next time for them'. When I asked him if he would be willing to be interviewed he refused, but he was happy to give me anecdotal evidence about what I was seeing and hearing. This was typical of what happened when people at Blackpool were asked for interviews. A German teacher commented on how it was always the English who won here, if not the English directly then some couple who had been taught by an English teacher. When asked, 'Why do people come and compete here if they know this?' she explained: 'We all love dancing at Blackpool, and so we tend to ignore the politics.'

Reynolds discusses this aspect without mentioning Blackpool. He writes:

It is a tribute to the participants in Dancesport that judges are rarely, if ever, openly criticized by dancers or spectators ... At one major international dance festival, the audience was clearly in favour of a particular professional Latin couple. When the favoured couple were placed only third, they received a standing ovation from the crowd, who in contrast clearly restrained themselves at the announcement of the first place winners. No boos, hisses, no shouts of reproach were heard. Instead the audience reversed the usual response, choosing to praise their favourites instead of berating the judges or the winner (1998:127-128).

The prizes

After all this hard work it does not mean that there are large amounts of prize money to be won. For the 'Professional Latin Rising Stars' the total prize money, shared amongst the first six couples, is £655; for the 'Senior Modern' it comes to £495 amongst the first six couples; for the 'Latin Amateur under 21s' there are £445 to be divided among the first six; for the 'Professional Modern Rising Stars', as with the Latin ditto, the six first couples get to share £655. The 'Senior Latin', as in the Modern, also won £495 among the first six couples. The 'Amateur Latin' shared £650 among the first six couples, the 'Amateur under 21s Modern' £445, as in the Latin. The largest cash prize was for the 'Professional Latin' dancers: this was £3250 to be shared among the first six couples, followed by the 'Professional Modern', whose prize money was said to be over £2600 to be shared by the first six couples. For the 'Formation Teams' the prizes ranged from £135 to the trainer of the winning team to

£95 to the trainer of the fifth team on a sliding scale. The team members won £185 for the first team, sliding to £145 for the fifth team.

In an advertisement for a New Dance Festival in Italy the prize money shown for Professional Dancers was stated to range from 4,200,000 lire (approximately £1800) for winners to 700,000 lire (£300) for sixth place. For Amateurs the first prize was 1,680,000 lire (£720) and went down to 420,000 (£180) for sixth place.

The reason that I mention the prize money is that it becomes quite clear that taking part in this form of dancing does not reap great financial benefits. When I have discussed this with several people there has tended to be a great reluctance to talk about finances. Certainly, as mentioned elsewhere, the top world-class couples are helped by large companies such as Chrisanne. Others, who have asked not to be named, have said that some British dancers command very high teaching fees in places like Japan. This, they feel, acts to the detriment of the younger British dancers, who are not being given the benefit of the experience of such teachers. There even was a suggestion from two people that I spoke to that the top dancers were very greedy. Realising how much other sports people or people in entertainment generally earn it seems that these people are not so much greedy, as in need of money in order to continue competitive dancing. Apart from teaching, most of the principal dancers spend a fair part of the year travelling round the world entering competitions. Such places as Australia, the USA, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany contain many of the favourite venues for such activities.

Round and about: Blackpool and the Festival

Competitive ballroom dancers throughout the world speak of Blackpool with an enthusiasm which no discriminating visitor to the city other than during the period of the Festival is likely to share. This previously traditional holiday resort has now become a place where those less inclined to holiday abroad go to, many of those people are Senior citizens, while others may be handicapped. However, during the period of the dance festival a contrasting group of people appear. Both groups are aware of each other and although they do not mix socially they rub shoulders frequently and speculate about each other. It would be remiss to study the Festival without discussing the affect it has on its periphery. The social impact that the Festival has produced causes changes, evanescent as they may be, in its surroundings.

Away from the spotlight of the dance floor plenty of interesting things also happen on the perimeter. Behind the stage is the changing room. This is a large area, unisex and egalitarian, where not only do all the dancers change, whether they be top Professionals or Amateurs, but also where members of the audience can go in and meet with friends. It was there that a young Australian amateur dancer asked me to help her with the finishing touches of her costume. During our conversation she asked, 'Is all of England like Blackpool?' This is a not unusual reaction from overseas visitors who have come to Blackpool only to be surprised by its combination of tawdriness and squalor with the glamour they expect. There is a measure of disillusionment, which often crops up among the contenders and their supporters, and not only among the foreigners. Even some British visitors coming to Blackpool for the first time are likely to feel disappointment, not with the Festival but with its setting. Many of the overseas contenders, especially those coming from far away and with ideas of England derived often from the gilded retrospective haze of British forebears or harking back to the age of British imperial dominance and pre-eminence, react as did this Australian visitor. She was quite shocked by the decay and shabbiness of the town, since by her and many others Blackpool is seen as the Mecca for competitive dancers and they do not expect its glamour to be so rigidly confined to the ballroom dancing world.

It was at Blackpool that there was brought home to me most forcibly the extent to which such competitions, intensively pursued, can affect the health of participants. Among the people I noticed and interviewed were two St John's Ambulance first-aid workers who were employed by the Dance Festival authorities. One of them, David, is a sports therapist and masseur who has a B.Sc. in Health Studies, and Julie, his assistant, is a trained nurse. They are taken on to deal with firstaid emergencies, and this is a free service for the dancers. For five years they have been coming to the Festival and have built up a regular clientele. There are other services such as massage, which the dancers pay for, and with this money new equipment is bought. They have oxygen, which they give regularly, and a variety of splints, as well as a quantity of such other equipment as may be required to cover most of the contingencies likely to arise. During each one of three interviews we were continually interrupted by dancers needing attention straight away, and so had to curtail the interviews.

The most common type of complaint David deals with is 'burn off' and muscle fatigue. This condition is often caused by dehydration when dancers dance many heats and

the calf muscles tighten, as most dancers dance on their toes. David then massages their legs. More women than men come to the First Aid Post, which is not surprising considering the shoes that the women wear for dancing. Sprained ankles, mostly lateral sprains, are also very common.

Head injuries also happen if, for example a dancer trips and bangs the head. Should this happen David arranges for the paramedics to take the patient to hospital, to have a scan if required. Sometimes the seriousness of the injury cannot be ascertained if the dancers have a poor knowledge of English, as they might not be able to answer the questions normally asked after head injuries. On many occasions the dancers will not go to hospital. David says one cannot force them, however should this happen he will advise them to go to their own doctor and explain what has happened. He also treats dancers in their own homes, if they live in the Lancashire area. Many of these are dance teachers who have old injuries needing treatment. Among the older patients quite a number need hip replacements because of the wear and tear on their bones brought about by continual energetic dancing.

David sees CBD as a sport, and as much in need of proper facilities for the treatment of injuries as any other sport. He has bought equipment, and is most grateful for the encouragement he has received from the Festival Organizer. Ideally, he would like to have more monitoring equipment at his disposal. He and Julie are also concerned about the lack of proper facilities at other venues, for example dancers who have been injured at other venues will come to Blackpool for treatment. He believes that there should be better facilities for dancers at all venues, but he also felt there should be some opportunity to treat spectators as well. They were not infrequently faint, overcome by heat and excitement, and also be subject to other maladies.

I found my whole experience of Blackpool quite strange. The first year I was there I was rather overwhelmed by what was going on and by the necessarily prominent part it was playing in my study of CBD. I was probably less really aware of the whole process and the social and political undercurrents. By the second time I had much more knowledge, and possibly this led me to become rather more cynical. One of the bizarre aspects was Blackpool itself, I had decided to look at the town itself, partly in view of what the young Australian had said and also because of the way the dancers talked about it. So many from all over the world saw it as the place to be, the culmination of their experiences. This seemed rather incongruous when one came to

look at Blackpool as a whole. So many competitive ballroom dancers when they talked about the Festival named Blackpool and not just the Winter Gardens, In view of this I thought that I would try to ascertain what the reality of the place is.

I went to the tourist office and spoke to one of the officials there, asking her mostly about the local impact of the dancers and what the official view was of the Festival. She spoke with great enthusiasm about the dancers and how Blackpool changes during the time of the Festival. Shops, hotels and businesses generally look forward to the event, and as far as staff at the tourist office is concerned, this, and the annual Policemen's Convention, are the highlights of the year. She has heard the dancers and their audiences being called the 'beautiful people' by the local people, and it is not meant as a scornful or derogatory term.

I then went into several shops and beauty clinics near the Winter Gardens to try to find out what impact the Festival made on them. At a local Marks and Spencer's the assistant manager said that they changed their food stocks at that time, and during the period of the Festival stocked much more bottled water and bananas and healthier food such as salads and low-calorie sandwiches. Their clothes department, especially lingerie, did brisker business during this period. A rather more up-market boutique owner told me that she has her busiest time during the Festival, many of the dancers take predominantly smaller sizes and are accustomed to designer clothes, and often spend quite a lot of money in her shop.

I went to two beauty treatment places, where I was able to speak to the owners. They told me that they had 'regular' clients among the dancers who came to them mostly for nail improvements, although some of the top female dancers also had other beauty treatments while in Blackpool. At another well-established shop, selling hand-made chocolates and other specialised confectionery, I was told that many of the dancers from abroad took these back to family and friends in their own countries. The owner of the hotel where I stayed said that normally they ask for a deposit before people can reserve a room, although they never ask this from the dance people as they have found them to be more reliable and honest than many of their other clients. They have had the same people coming from all over the world for several years now, and when they come they know that these regular clients will meet up, stay up till all hours of the night with their friends discussing dance, often having breakfast in their rooms or none at all depending on how late the discussions go on for. It seems

that for the dancers there are special rules and routines that appear to be very different from those that apply to the other people visiting Blackpool.

Since in my own very subjective view Blackpool in general appeared such a run-down area, I contacted one of the relevant officials at the Town Hall to ask about the current economic situation, and he kindly supplied me with the details which follow. In discussion with the official before he sent me the statistics, I commented that I felt that Blackpool was an area in decline. He confirmed this and said that the city had applied to the European Community for economic aid in order to repair and update many of the facilities.

According to a local statistics handout labelled *Blackpool In Focus - 3*, which was published by Blackpool Corporation, last updated late in 2001 and provided to me by the Blackpool Corporation, there is a high prevalence of unemployment. Blackpool has a low proportion of people in work (49%) when compared with 54% in Great Britain as a whole. There is also a greater percentage of economically inactive people (44%), consisting of students (6% of the total), those permanently ill (15%), retired people (50%), or others economically inactive, such as those looking after home and family. This may be compared with the whole of the United Kingdom (39%). The handout also admits that it has the 29th worst GDP/per head in the UK (2001). From the local press records job losses have exceeded job creations, and the number of businesses registered for VAT purposes has declined since 1994. Eighteen percent of the work-force is employed in the tourist industry. Eighty-seven percent of those employed in Blackpool work in the service industries. Only 1,204 of the total population of 146,069 belong to ethnic minority communities.

Blackpool has the hope that it will come to resemble a new Las Vegas. A Gambling Act recently passed could enable Blackpool to open up more casinos and similar locations and this is felt to be the way forward for the area. A television programme entitled 'Vegas on Sea' has been shown on BBC2. This indicated that Marc Etches of the Leisure Parks Group (the company that owns the Winter Gardens) plans to build a massive casino in Blackpool. Etches certainly made quite a convincing case for something like this for Blackpool, although his emphasis on being a social reformer left one wondering about his agenda. He discussed the curse of heavy drinking - though it was not clear how opening a casino was likely to curb this - and stressed the need for further urban development planning.

I not only viewed an area in decline but, like some of the visitors from overseas, was also rather surprised by what I saw in the evenings while I was there. On the whole Blackpool seems nowadays to attract elderly and disabled people to its boarding houses and hotels. However, at Bank Holiday weekends it tends to draw crowds of young people in search of a wild time. Another television programme, broadcast by ITV on the twentieth of August 2002 and entitled 'Holidays from Hell', dealt with Blackpool during the May Bank Holiday weekend, which coincides with the beginning of the Dance Festival. It illustrated how the behaviour of the young people who come there at that time is so bad on the streets that there is a need for constant police surveillance. The Accident and Emergency Departments of the local hospitals gear themselves up to expect severe and threatening injuries, coupled with extraordinarily poor coöperation from the patients, who are often not merely mannerless but actively aggressive - so much so that the staff has to carry alarm bleeps in order to summon help when dealing with them. The area where much of the violence happens is quite near the Winter Gardens. There is no way that the dancers can avoid seeing this, even though many of them travel by taxi to and from the dance venues. On the way back to my hotel I normally walked through this area and observed many intoxicated young people who had obviously been drinking or were under the influence of drugs and were fighting among themselves. On the whole, I am not worried by such scenes, nevertheless one of my fellow-residents insisted on walking me home after the dance events.

Fortunately by the end of the Dance Festival most of the young people had returned to whence they had come, and as a result the late-night outlook felt less threatening. Alcoholic abuse especially seems to be quite a problem for the Blackpool authorities, which is probably why it was specifically brought up by Marc Etches and cited among his arguments in favour of the casinos.

It might well be asked what the foregoing comments have to do with CBD. It is quite significant that when dancers talk about the excitements of the dance event at Blackpool they do not mention the Winter Gardens or the Festival as such; how they describe it is as the 'wonder of Blackpool', which to me seems rather incongruous. When the young Australian described her surprise at what she saw in Blackpool, I was reminded very much of the Hans Andersen story of 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. Like the child in that story, she had been seeing it as it was, as far as I was concerned, and not as such a place of wonder as she had been led to expect. This aspect of the way Blackpool is viewed may have something to do with the fantasy

surrounding the dance. And it could be yet another, perhaps oblique, instance of the transformation the dance brings about.

In this chapter I have explored in some detail several important aspects of differences of approach to CBD. The Oxford experience can be taken as a typical of a team approach in which the participants are drawn together by being at university together, a shared experience unrelated to CBD. In effect, when they express their feelings about of CBD they do so in a way which does not represent those feelings as they might have been had they been sharing them with partners they had chosen in a less restricted social context. The Blackpool experience contrasts this insofar as the competitors come together in units consisting of self – selective pairs competing as pairs and not necessary brought together originally by anything other than an enthusiasm for dancing. The Oxford teams competed with other teams assembled from populations made up of individuals sharing much the same social and academic background, while the Blackpool competitors presumably come from a wide variety of social backgrounds and the whole represented only themselves or particular sponsors. The venues where the Oxford teams competed were used for other purposes apart from dancing, while Blackpool was an uniquely special venue, internationally recognised. There were no associated commercial concerns aiming specifically at supplying commodities required by the Oxford teams and their rivals (apart from those concerned with ‘the Look’), while the ancillary services offered to the dancers in Blackpool were many and varied. What needs to be stressed, however, is the overriding similarity of all the participants in their approach to the dance and of the ways in which they describe their feelings for it – an aspect which is explored more fully in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Transformations

In this chapter I will attempt to engage with a more elusive and certainly intangible, aspect of dance - its power to transform those who give themselves up to it. In previous chapters I have considered what the dancers have to do in order to dance, to compete and to win. Here my concern is to what can happen to them in the course of dancing itself.

Transformation was not described by any of my informants as a factor constituting a bond between partners even while dancing; it is seen essentially as a personal experience. The definition of transformation as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1982, ed. J. B. Sykes) is that of a change of form. Form itself is given a number of different meanings: the one most applicable in the sense in which it is used here are those of 'essential nature', 'mode in which a things changes' and a 'customary state'. Many of the people I spoke to would either not have used the word 'transformation' spontaneously or have done so rather self- consciously. They would rather describe themselves as 'flying', 'having a buzz which made them feel like different people', 'being in another world', 'in a world of fantasy' and in similar terms. These experiences could be identified by some as transformations, or perhaps, states of trance, transcendence (in Rostas's (1998) sense) or ecstasy.

One of the largest groups of myths in folklore is that concerned with transformation from one external form of being to another. In this, full knowledge of the prior form is retained while much of the point of the tale is concerned with adaptation to the new form. Legends of partial transformations and alternating transformations are also chronicled. The power to compel another to change form, or to be able to cross boundaries at will, could be judged either good or evil. The transformation with which we are dealing here, however, does not involve a change of external form. It is essentially a feeling of a change engendered not by an outside agent but through actions undertaken by the person who experiences it and not primarily intended to occur through those actions but incidentally and supplementarily to them.

Instances of self-transformation in the literature such as those mentioned in the *Sayings of the Buddha* (1955) and *The Upanishads* (1948) are described as the positive and deliberate purposes of transcendence, of breaking out of a current state and into a more exalted one. Once again, this is not altogether the same as the

subjective transformation experienced in competitive ballroom dancing (and in other sports), but it is worthwhile looking at the phenomenon on a general scale and at its association with repetition and ritual. In many societies ritual change involves a transition period in which boundaries are broken and chaos rules, and this is overcome as order is restored. . Such a state has been described in Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* (1909). In that classic study the author noted that a large number of rituals follow the conceptual pattern of initiation. Initiates are ritually separated from everyday life and inducted into an excluded, separate realm. Following this separation they are ritually re-incorporated into everyday life in an altered state, or are reborn.

What is being described here, however, is not the assumption of a permanently altered state like that following a *rite de passage*, but comes and goes. In *Ecstatic Religion* Myrddin Lewis (1989) discusses how trance-like states can be 'readily induced in most normal people by a wide range of stimuli, applied either separately or in combination' (1989: 34) For trance he uses the definition 'a condition of disassociation, characterised by the lack of voluntary movement, and frequently by automatism in act and thought, illustrated by hypnotic and mediumistic conditions' (1989:34). The best-known techniques applied include, significantly, music and dancing. It is possible to suggest that the degree of automatism in CBD, the regularity of the dance-steps and the sequences followed by the dancing couples, may contribute to the reported feelings of transformation. Thomas (1993) also describes, in a article about young black dancers whom she studied, how ' the feelings experienced through dancing, the pleasure of moving, of releasing tension, of transcendence, were present in the talk of both the young men and the young women interviewed' (1993:83). For the purpose of this study I should like to suggest that it is possible that the secretion of endorphins - natural opiates found in the human brain - which it has been shown can be induced by activities such as jogging, may also be triggered by competitive ballroom dancing and possibly the music associated with it.

Furthermore, it is normal in people for too much of any kind of stimulus ultimately to reach a point of dissonance, which requires a resolution of some sort - either a discharge of energy, or withdrawal or numbing. These states, which may be culturally adaptive, are also capable of being induced. In his book *Off the Ground* Francis Sparshott states that for him what makes dancing different from 'dance-like activities' such as are seen, for example, in some forms of play, especially among children, is

that it presents 'a kind of special mode of being, or transformational quality' (1988: 204). He admits to not being a dancer himself, but even so, his experience in some dances was not like anything he knew; and he described it as 'a transportation into an altered state of being' (1988:204). He felt that insofar as he learned to dance a partial transformation had taken place in him, whereas in some others a complete change was achieved. The sort of transformation he describes was not special or 'mystical' but more 'an enhanced version of quality that, if one troubles to attend to it, pervades experience...But the experience of becoming part of the dance is something much stronger, with a much more marked savor' (1988: 204).

It is worth emphasising that some forms of transformation may be of permanent rather than temporary duration, as is exemplified in rites of passage. For example young boys from Southern Angola and Zaire attend an initiation school, *makanda*, where they learn to become 'complete' persons or 'human beings' (Gerhard Kubik 1993). Their training involves a special music and the learning of appropriate dances. Kubik describes the novices' dances as 'part of a culturally-tested repertory of techniques to achieve a lasting change in an individual's patterns of behaviour. The coordination of movement patterns that are performed by more than one person is both an expression of and a tool for the creation of a feeling of group attachment and solidarity' (Kubik 1977). Here, however, the transformation is not so much the achievement of exaltation as a socially stipulated transition from one position in society to another (Kubik and Malamusi 1987). The exaltation experienced in the transition is anticipated and remembered and the memory is cherished, but the moment of the transformation is by definition unrepeatable. It is the responsibility of those thus transformed to instruct and even torment subsequent generations into undergoing the same transformation (Kubik, personal communication).

In an article entitled 'The play within the play' Francis Huxley states that 'There is of course no doubt that drumming and dance are prime instruments in the production of dissociation and possession' (1977:36). Dance can thus be a means of transfiguration into an altered state, either by gaining a sharpened sense of one's individual human presence and/or by transcending one's individuality and merging with a group (Ellen Dissanayake 1995). Like music, dance may draw in and subsume the participants who can no longer achieve or maintain reflexive distance. In a number of societies rhythmic enthusiasm from repeated movements and sounds, and hyperventilation and sympathetic arousal from exertion, ultimately bring about ecstasies of possession or trance.

Richard Schechner, a New York City theatre director and teacher who describes himself as a performance theorist, emphasizes the control and artificiality inherent in all performances by describing them as 'twice behaved' behaviour (1985:36) He argues that in performance of every kind—including shamanism, exorcism, trance, dance, ritual, theatre and even psychoanalysis--- 'strips of behaviour' are taken out of their natural context and used as material for the reconstructed whole. Life provides the material that performers-- through their art of shaping, rearranging, controlling, interpreting and elaborating-- reconstitute and restore to life in the performance. (Schechner, 1985:35). This may perhaps be applied to the domain of CBD in the sense that participants in it feel themselves moving from a 'real' into an 'ideal' world without breaking contact between the two. This was especially the case with the university dance teams, who throughout their often very intense involvement in physical competition retained the consciousness that it did not substitute for but marginally albeit amply supplemented their professional careers (cf. Bourdieu 1990). Whether the competitive element present in both provided one of the links was never completely clear to me - nor was it, I think, to them - though it certainly played a part in the transformation they experienced. This was probably a good deal more pronounced where the transition was more unequivocally one from drabness into splendour, as it was for many of the competitors in Blackpool, for whom competition may have played an even larger part in everyday life than it did for the socially relatively privileged university teams.

It occurred to me, probably in part due to observations made in other contexts, particularly during my earlier period as a social worker, which brought me into contact with large groups of people varying in religious beliefs and social mores, that other people might have experiences similar to those of dancers but with quite unrelated aims, and without any intervention of a competitive element. As a result I decided to explore the possibility of any common factors in the experiences of transformation and/or feelings of ecstasy in such groups and compare them with the experiences of dancers. With this in mind I decided to approach a single well- documented and readily accessible group from one of the major Western religions.

I had been particularly struck by the notions in some Roman Catholic lay circles about the fancied experiences of priests in the course of the Mass; so I decided to seek information on the subject from Roman Catholic priests. . Although I.M. Lewis says that as with other established religions 'orthodox Christianity has generally

sought to belittle mystical interpretations of trance' (1989:35), he goes on to say that, 'it is mainly in the context of trance states ascribed to the work of the Devil that we meet official ecclesiastical recognition of possession' (1989:35). Today even within the Catholic Church there are a few recognized remaining cases which Catholic psychiatrists feel more or less unable to explain in more prosaic terms. When I mooted the idea of ecstatic transformation to a devout Roman Catholic layman, he told me that he had observed a priest in a 'different state', which he said might be called 'a state of grace', when celebrating Mass. In fact in his description suggested that he thought the priest then became a different person from the one he might meet or see in the street. In Bertholt Brecht's play *Leben des Galilei* the Pope (Urban VIII, a man noted for his rationality) is made to appear to go into a state of ecstasy when robing. It has to be borne in mind, however, that this dramatic performance is not necessarily based on a real occurrence. After having read through some literature advised by a former priest I found nothing to substantiate the claim made by some of the laity that priests in general went through states of transformation or went into a state resembling trance. I resolved in my approach to this question to avoid any possible confusion with demonic possession, and in the event none arose.

I contacted three Roman Catholic priests of my acquaintance, none of them still active in the priesthood, but all with vivid memories both of their seminary training and their subsequent lives as priests, and able to testify to such experiences, if any, among their colleagues. I asked if they knew of its happening during any particular rituals within the church that priests felt or might be expected to feel religious enthusiasm amounting to a trance or a state of ecstasy. The first priest that I contacted said that he had never had occasion to celebrate High Mass but he felt that there were so many tasks to perform in the course of Low Mass that there would be no time to be in any other state of mind apart from getting on with the ceremony. (On consulting the instructions for Low Mass in Adrian Fortescue and J. B. O'Connell's *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (1962, pp. 57 – 79) the complexity of the requirements described made it was easy for me to understand how this could be the case). However, he considered it is possible that, this sort of effect, might be produced by High Mass, with its help of incense and music.

Another priest felt unable to help me as he had left the church and the faith behind him. He himself had never experienced transformation, nor did he know of anyone who had. His main problem was that there were so many aspects of the religion that

he now disagreed with that he felt unable to give an unbiased view. However, he suggested making enquiries of a former priest who was now an academic and still involved in researching theology.

The third priest, unlike the first one I contacted, felt it was most likely that a state of ecstasy would happen when there were few people present, since a presence of a few devout worshipers might be more conducive to it than a larger congregation of routine church goers. He remembers clearly when he was in the seminary, one priest when giving individuals communion often appeared to be in a trance-like state. He felt perhaps that was linked more to the personality of the priest than to the ritual of the Mass. He described one ritual happening which might resemble that in the Brecht play: it seemed to him to be very much a theatrical performance to impress others rather than to be a ritual affecting the main players, and some parts of its enactment might indeed be seen as states of ecstasy subsumed into carefully choreographed religious rituals. We also discussed the Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches in general, and he felt that the Roman Church would be the one most likely to appear to seem to have forms of ecstasy in view of the solemnity, formality and antiquity of parts of the service. He also suggested that some of the New Age religions seemed to encourage ideas of ecstasy and/or transformation.

Many of the New Age religions do take on an appearance of different forms of belief, mostly as a breakaway from the original faiths of their founders and the assimilation of acts and beliefs which are or thought to be those of peoples or sects assumed to have retained particular paths of communion with the inexpressible, most of such paths involving the induction of changed states of consciousness and/or behaviour produced either from the beginning or with the help of particular substances. These movements are concerned not so much with facilitating self-transcendence as with self-realization and induction on to a higher plane of being brought about through a process of 'channelling' of the wisdom of extramundane beings, directed by a leader (Matthew Wood 2001). (The word 'extramundane' is used here to signify uncertainty about whether the so-called 'Ascended Masters' are supernatural or extraterrestrial or perhaps both, or ghosts.) Each New Age event takes the form of a socialization session and does not involve any element of competition. Though the ecstatic component may be, and very often is, present, it is not necessarily conjured up, as it is in *rites de passage* and in formal physical competitions, by any set performances involving bodily activities. The possibility that consciousness-altering substances might be involved in the production of a feeling of transformation in ballroom dancing

was indignantly repudiated by my informants. Such abstinence was frequently acclaimed by parents of the competitors, many even crediting their children's freedom from addiction to alcohol or drugs to a compensatory enthusiasm for dancing and an awareness that such abstinence contributed to the maintenance of the physical standards necessary for participation in CBD.

Disassociation is the usual term used for a total break away from the main stream of consciousness. Erica Bourguignon refers to altered states such as 'ecstatic dancing' and distinguishes two types: that used 'as a vehicle for achieving mystic states' and that used 'in the ritual enactment of a role' (1968:19). These premises are based on function and content, that is, altered states are classified by behaviour: ecstatic dance and trance. The former is active, the extreme of heightened arousal; and the latter is passive, characterised by withdrawal or numbing. The two major agencies for their attainment seem to be that of 'abandoning of oneself' to the experience (Margaret Kartomi 1973:166) and that of taxing of one's endurance by means of extreme effort. One can admit ecstasy in dancing as probably playing a role in transformation, though the part played by a trance-like state in CBD would be hard to define. Joann Kealiinohomoku (1965) also discusses how some dancers' and sports people's bodies can be transformed by the intrusion of masochistic tendencies. She notes that there are two sub-categories of these: the physically masochistic like those associated with dance and other forms of behaviour which depend on optimal use of the body, and the emotionally masochistic tendencies that are associated with super-ordinary performance. Using her terms, in physical masochism we may include those participants in vigorous dance and sports who experience the pleasurable discomfort of the sweat and fatigue that comes from a 'good workout'. This state of discomfort is often sought in order to earn the rebound feeling of relief. People who do this to themselves on purpose, must receive some clear sense of reward that is psychological as well as physical. Emotional masochism, however, takes its reward not from the subsequent relief but from the consciousness of attainment. Those who have watched films of Roger Bannister achieving the four-minute mile will recognize this state, and it can be present in CBD, as the statement by the rock-and-roll champion quoted in an earlier chapter attests. The idea that 'the show must go on' when, for example, there are dramatic times in an actor's or dancer's life when most other people would stop, could also be seen as a form of emotional masochism. It may make up part of the motivation of the dancer or the athlete, but only part. In the example of the runner it perhaps comes closer to the urge to fight of a soldier to do his duty. An exception in dance is the now extinct marathon dancing competitions of

the Depression (cf the film *They shoot horses, don't they?:1969*), but they have never formed part of competitive ballroom dancing.

Many dancers constantly punish their bodies, and reasons need to be sought for this. Sensory-motor excitation and rhythmic repetition in selected channels seem to be especially required by some persons. When the endocrines are secreting and other physiological stimuli are working hard, the rise in temperature and muscle pain seems to be necessary to regain homeostasis, and when the experience is over the relief through relaxation of tensions, satisfaction of sensory perceptions, the drop in temperature, and the cessation of pain all reveal the equilibrium is restored. It may be that physical masochism is a distinctive feature of the dancer.

This is similar to the experience of a person who becomes violently ecstatic in religious dance movements. Some of those people lose consciousness, or hurl themselves against walls and furniture, but when they regain normal equilibrium, they invariably testify that they feel refreshed. If in fact the experience is revitalizing, if it is a positive experience, I must agree with Kealiinohomoku (1965) that it is unjustified to call such behaviour pathological.

There have been descriptions of ballet dancers who have been said to have gone through such pain and discomfort because ballet does so much damage to their feet. They are often described as having 'blisters, bunions, and calluses, as well as toes that are black and blue (Coffin, 1974). Studies of athletes (Chapin, 1974) too have shown that despite grave injuries, either through will power or with the aid of mechanical devices and drugs, athletes will continue to compete. Chapin found at that time that pride, competitiveness, peer support and fear of losing their jobs or status were the major factors. Pride ought not to be ignored as a motivating factor; to have endured an ordeal is no mean achievement. Legends and parables illustrating this exist in many traditions. It could be that dancers and athletes have body images which make them think that they can compete at all times and are unable to accept that their bodies could be handicapped in any way; but if so it might be necessary to meld both types of masochism into one and to combine this with the extra corporeal sensation which is common to both.

In 1991 Meyers developed a Sport Inventory for Pain (SIP) in which athletes were asked how they felt about pain and how it influenced their performance. Among the responses which he described as the direct-coping were the following : 'I see pain as

a challenge and don't let it bother me; I owe it to myself and those around to perform even when my pain is bad and no matter how bad the pain gets, I can handle it.' He also studied the cognitive answers such as; 'when in pain, I tell myself it doesn't hurt; when in pain, I replay in my mind pleasant performances from the past.' The last significant category for his responses was that of the catastrophizing ones, responses included : 'when in pain I worry about it all the time; when injured I pray for the pain to stop'. Other categories he studied were avoidance strategies and body-awareness but in his research they were of less importance (1991:46).

This sensation of having existence outside the body has been receiving increasing attention in the literature in recent years, and can be related to the sense of 'flow', dealt with in particular by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and his co-authors. A definition of flow is given in Susan Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and reads as follows: 'It is a state of consciousness where one becomes totally absorbed in what one is doing, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and emotions' (1999:5). This may seem an oversimplification in the context of what we have been saying about transformation, but it has the simplicity which lends itself to subsequent elaboration. Flow is about focus, and like the ecstasy of bodily exertion it is a harmonious experience where mind and body are working together effortlessly, making the person feel then and subsequently that something special has just occurred. It is neither entirely elevation, or a feeling of elevation, nor is it just a sensation of being external to one's surroundings, yet it partakes of both of these as well as incorporating an awareness of self and of being in control of self. Although winning may be important for those experiencing flow, Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi claim that flow does not depend on it. Not all the practices they examine have an important competitive aspect : flow offers something more than just a successful outcome. This is also borne out in the case of CBD by some of the comments made by members of the Oxford dance teams. 'When I dance well in competition I feel elated, the judges' opinion doesn't matter so much.' 'When I dance well, it doesn't matter so much if I was eliminated.' Similar experiences are to be found elsewhere in the literature on CBD; a highly personal account is given by Sally Peters (1991), though her description of the experience, unlike those of most others, seems indissolubly linked to the matter of gender, a subject which most of my own informants did not claim to be of primary importance. To almost all those I interviewed the issue of partnership loomed large but only in the sense of a capacity for cooperation and trust of both partners on the engendering of a purely asexual exhilaration. This was made explicit by a female dancer from Oxford : 'forget all the problematic gender issues (pathetic,

fragile, delicate female vs. masculine, virile driving force) it's a *real* feel-good factor.' My impressions were that this dancer and others were not at all interested in the stereotypical views of gender, although they recognised that the image they were conveying was that of the dominant male and the submissive female who had to follow her partner, they felt that this was part of the performance and not what was actually happening in real life. As the female coach of the Oxford team said about the female dancers: 'they are very strong-willed women, hard working, not always easy to teach but they are always determined to be the best at what they do whether it be at their studies or at leisure activities.'

Flow lifts experience to the optimal, and it is in those moments that those who experience it feel truly alive and in tune with what they are doing. Jackson and Csikszentmihaly give two examples of how flow works in sports:

- 1) A swimmer. 'When I have been happiest with my performance. I've sort of felt one with the water and my stroke and my everything I was really tuned in to what I was doing, I knew exactly how I was going to swim the race, and I just knew that I had it all under control, and I got in and I was really aware of what everyone in the race was doing.....I was just totally absorbed in my stroke, and I knew that I was passing them but I didn't care. I mean it's not that I didn't care; I was going. 'Oh this is cool'. And I just swam and won, and I was totally in control of the situation. It felt really cool' (1999:4).
- 2) A runner. 'I felt really in control, just terrific the whole way, and didn't feel the pain I would normally feel in the run.....I just really enjoyed the experience of running and probably had the most successful race ever of my life...It wasn't as painful as the others. I felt very in control, I felt very strong. I was able to run as I had planned----I felt really focused. I just felt like, you know, like athletes say "it clicked"; it felt great the whole way' (1999:4).

Especially interesting here are the subjective admission by the second of the two that pain is generally associated with the effort of the sport but that on the occasion described it was either absent or not experienced, and the statement by the first and by the Oxford dancers quoted above that in the transcendence of effort the sense of competition previously present was lost. This rather suggests that the experience of flow represents something, which goes beyond simply the exaltation brought on by effort. It may be suggested that this is the culmination of the transformation. It differs, however, from the outcome of a *rite de passage* insofar as the latter is a single and unrepeatable experience involving a change in the social status, whereas the transformations and associated feelings which go together with the dance and the sport are recurrent and therefore things of which the repetition is actively sought.

'Flow is a state with unusual qualities which is said to be experienced by all manner of people' (Jackson and Csikszentmihaly(1999: 5). Among the examples cited are 'Elderly German gardeners describe the feeling of intense involvement tending their roses' and 'Navajo shepherds following their flocks on horseback' (Jackson and Csikszentmihaly 1999: 5). Although activities such as sport present special opportunities for flow to occur, it is important to mention that not all those participating in sport claim actually to achieve this state, any more than a good many of the dancers I interviewed do. It is possible, however, that there may be social and perhaps national factors which militate against the admission of emotion associated with physical activity. Flow appears to involve, as certain religious trances do, a combination of motivation and an abundant confidence in one's ability. It is a characteristic of those with a sense of being chosen to succeed, though it has ultimately not all that much to do with winning.

Jackson and Csikszentmihaly claim that there are nine fundamental components which best describe the mind-set in flow:

1. Challenge-skills balance
2. Action awareness
3. Clear goals
4. Unambiguous feedback
5. Concentration on the task at hand.
6. Sense of control
7. Loss of self consciousness
8. Transformation of time
9. Autotelic experience

The first requisite for flow is the *CS (Challenge/Skill) balance*, that is, 'the challenges that you think you face, and the skills you think you have' (1999:6) As Jackson and Csikszentmihaly point out, this purely subjective perception is the one that predicts flow, and is not objective. Whether you are in flow in an activity, or whether you are bored or anxious, depends to a large extent on your perception. Let us look at it from the perspective of the competitive dancer. Having trained hard for the competition, the dancer waits to go on to the dance area feeling a little nervous, probably eager because one is well-prepared but nervous because the competition means a lot to one and one's partner. The dancer has to be sure of winning, but also needs to bear

in mind that the opponents are well skilled and just as assured. Concentration is so focussed on goals that all one's other worries disappear, the dancer becomes so much in tune with the dance that he/she is able virtually without being aware of it to make adjustments to match the dance routine of the rival dancers. This is how Csikszentmihaly and Jackson perceive the optimal state of flow 'when a person's abilities match his or her opportunity for action—in other words, when the *CS balance* is operating' (1999:8).

In consequence action and awareness merge, the dancers feel and think in a way aptly captured in the last two lines of the poem 'Among School Children', in William Butler Yeats's collection *The Tower* (1928):

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

This oneness with movement does not require effort in flow. Indeed, the feedback is processed by the mind spontaneously, like breathing, as part of one seamless process. It is this process of the body and mind performing at the limits of their capacity, and yet doing so effortlessly, that eventually produces total absorption, or the merging of action and awareness. When this occurs a person feels at one with his or her actions. Those in flow feel that their actions are effortless and spontaneous. Even though they might be making a superhuman, even painful, effort amounting to emotional masochism, at the moment this act of emotional masochism feels completely natural.

Awareness of the action itself is also needed. It must follow through deliberately, not in simple automatism. Another component of flow is that it needs clear goals. To enter flow, goals should be clearly set in advance, so that the person knows exactly what he or she has to do. As the activity progresses, a dancer/athlete then knows moment by moment what to do next—and is more likely to experience flow. This is because clarity of intention helps to focus attention and avoid distraction. A member of an Oxford University dance team referred to CBD as 'a form of exercise that also engages the mind.' Knowing what is required means that there is no need to doubt what one is doing.

Unambiguous feedback can come from many different sources, one of the most important being awareness of the quality of a performance as it occurs. Furthermore

knowing, and the way in which it matches an ideal performance, make up a skill that allows performers to be conscious moment by moment, whether they are creating the movements they want. There can also be external feedback from people, such as other performers and the audience. Flow spills over into the audience when a particular movement, or the interpretation of a sequence, evokes spontaneous applause. Furthermore the nature of partnerships means that people who dance together have at the time to be close emotionally, which also imposes an emotional demand requiring feedback. This is partially created by the fact that one always feels an element of self-competition, of striving towards a personal best, and because there is no objective standard of self-satisfaction and that the satisfaction of others are needed:

When the goals are clear, feedback immediate, and your abilities engaged by an appropriate challenge, you still need all the attention you can muster to attend to what has to be done. Concentration is a critical component and one of the characteristics of optimal experience mentioned most by athletes (Jackson and Csikszentmihaly 1999: 25).

Even hearing the crowds cheering one on when competing may not indicate a lack of focus but rather being in tune with the event. Learning to exclude irrelevant thoughts from consciousness and instead to tune it into a task is a sign of a disciplined mind. Those remembering what it is like to be in the flow state often report that while it continues they can do no wrong. According to a Blackpool competitor, 'You reach a stage when it doesn't matter whether you win or lose, you're just carried along by what's happening'. Like a feeling of invincibility, the sense of control frees the dancer from the fear of failure and creates a feeling of empowerment for the challenging tasks to be executed. More than actually being in control, it is knowing that if one tries hard, one can be in control: One trusts one's skills and one knows that the task is doable. The outcome of this knowledge is a sense of power, confidence, and calm.

Concern for the self disappears when one is in flow, as do worries and negative thoughts. There is simply no attention left over to worry about the things that in ordinary life we usually spend so much time dwelling on. Flow frees the individual from self-doubt and self-concern. As a competition winner in Blackpool (quoted earlier) put it, 'I think that you can see it was such a roller coaster of emotions but then you can't stop smiling and we kept saying to each other Hi champ, we are the nationwide rock 'n roll champions.' Loss of self-consciousness is an empowering characteristic: after the flow experience, the perception of self is stronger and more positive. In this way, indeed, it may bear a resemblance to the successful outcome of

some other varieties of physical competition. Relinquishing worries about the self for a period of time is in addition refreshing and liberating. Perhaps paradoxically, it is through a sense of control that loss of self-consciousness is facilitated. When a dancer has mastered the movements, he or she has gained the liberty to use them going further.

Loss of consciousness of the self is traditionally found in descriptions of the religious experience, but its occurrence as an ingredient of flow shows that it may also be part of the experience of the laity. Among dancers it often constitutes both an aspect of performance, a project of the self away from the self and towards the onlookers and a submersion of the self into the collective, which is the awareness of a new entity shared not only with the partners but with fellow dancers around one.

Being aware of time is a fate that today's lifestyle thrusts upon us. Most people continually refer to their watches to gauge how much time there is left or how much time remains until some better event will commence. Time dependence is a burden that can prevent us from becoming involved in what we are doing. I was surprised about the short duration of the heats, especially in Blackpool, and wondered whether this external constraint in any way affect the sense of transformation in the dancers. Unexpectedly, none of the dancers claimed that it did: it appeared that the heightened emotions aroused by anticipation had already somehow paved the way for its occurrence. One might even regard them as being incorporated into flow. Flow manifestly has the potential to free us from this pressure of time: one of the characteristics in flow is having a transformed sense of the way time proceeds. Generally what is experienced in flow is a shortening of time, so that hours pass by like minutes, or minutes like seconds. The reverse can also occur, with minutes seeming to stretch into luxurious longer periods, providing the perception of having all the time in the world for actions to be performed. From accounts described to me by informants, either of these sensations may be felt during the fervour of competitive dancing.

It seems that the transformation of time is a by-product of total concentration. When one is focussed entirely on a task, one cannot keep track of the passing of time, which, when one reflects back on the event, can lead to altered perceptions of how the time has passed. When one is concentrating, one can forget time, so that an event may seem to have finished 'before you knew it' The slowing down of time can also be related to concentration, one responds to things with more clarity. Not all

performers report transformation as including a change in the sense of time. 'It's wonderful whatever happens. The world stops for you or not, depending, but whether it does or doesn't, you still feel, well, like your feet aren't on the ground, you're up there.' When time is experienced, however, it can feel very liberating to live in a timeless movement.

Jackson and Csikszentmihaly describe autotelic experience as 'the end result of the other eight components of flow (1999:30). This is when flow is so rewarding that performers speak of staying on high for long periods of time after the event. The reality of such exceptional experiences are there for everyone, not just the elite or the professional performers. 'The memory of flow experience becomes a beacon that shows us the way back from the buffeting waves into a safe haven (1999:31). Flow thus provides a glimpse of perfection, which can be why it is so repeatedly sought by so many performers, it is a way of viewing happiness.

The state of being happy is important for the understanding of CBD on both its performative and its competitive aspects. Happiness is a prominent objective of human activity in general, yet beyond such trite generalisation lies the question of what it actually is. In Csikszentmihaly's (1992) book *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness* the author in fact goes some way towards equating flow with that most elusive and indefinable of human states, happiness. According to Book I and chapters 6 and 7 of Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1954) concluded that, more than anything else, human beings seek *eudaimonia*, a term suggesting satisfaction of spirit but usually and not entirely inaccurately translated as happiness. While happiness is sought for its own sake, every other benefit or goal – health, beauty, money, power or even affection, which Aristotle considered essential for *eudaimonia* - is only valued because we expect that it will make us happy. We still do not fully understand what happiness is or how to attain it any better than Aristotle and his contemporaries did. In the course of his research, Csikszentmihaly, studying happiness in depth, came to the conclusion that it is not something that just happens. He saw it as 'a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can be to being happy' (1992:3).

It is not immediately obvious how this state of happiness may be achieved, or how it is involved in competition. Most of the forces that affect our lives are beyond our

control. Yet we have all experienced times when we do feel, as some participants in competitive ballroom dancing have told me they do, in control of our immediate destinies; but it is not easy to conclude that this what happiness means. On those occasions when this happens we certainly experience a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished. This is what Csikszentmihaly calls *optimal experience*. I can give an example of this from my own experience. It came about when my husband and I were with another sailor on a yacht off a large island in the South Pacific. A very strong wind from the seaward quarter suddenly sprang up and the yacht, beating along a lee shore, became hard to control. For hours we battled against the elements, trying to bring the yacht to face into the wind as she lunged through the sea. For us there was no sense of fear but just the problem of how we could get the boat to the smaller island for which we were making. With raised adrenaline and the triumphant feeling of having overcome the elements we eventually managed to do this. For the owner of the yacht, who was very experienced in sailing in the Pacific, as for us, it was one of those occasions that we will not forget. The exhilaration of getting there and somehow taking control of the situation despite damage to the superstructure of the yacht gave us a strong sense of having passed a testing situation successfully, of achieving a certain type of happiness. The durability of the memory of this experience has somehow made it easier for me to recognise and appreciate the similar exhilaration of achievement when this has been described to me by competitive ballroom dancers.

Csikszentmihaly in his account of flow claims that, contrary to what we believe, episodes such as I have just described, rather than the passive and relaxing times, make up the best moments of our lives. The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. 'Optimal experience is thus that something we *make happen*' (1992: 3). The relevance of this to the experiences of dancers is deducible from their accounts of what their feelings have been at the time. It is not just the dance itself which brings about transformation: this would be less likely were there not also the effort inherent in excelling, competing and overcoming obstacles.

The dance is the medium through which this is accomplished, the medium chosen for the dancer for its attainment. Nevertheless to survive in a complex society it is necessary to work for external as well as internal goals, to suppress one's striving and sometimes to postpone immediate gratification. One should not necessarily adhere to all social controls, but rather gradually become free of societal rewards and

learn to substitute for them rewards that are within one's own powers, and in that way find one's own set of awards. In competitive ballroom dancing, as in sport, the degree of gratification is not necessarily proportionate to how close one comes to winning. There is nothing new in all this. As far back as the oracle at Delphi (and in less familiar traditions but with no less intensity), and ranging through generations over time, people have been encouraged to 'know themselves'. To compete in ballroom dancing is manifested by those who do so as a form of gratification of which they are aware and which they themselves have recognised and chosen. Csikszentmihaly claims that it is not enough to know how to do this; but that one should actually carry it out, and keep on doing it. The reason perhaps why it is not done is that actions become painfully slow when it comes to modifying behaviour. Furthermore conditions undergo change at varying rates in each new generation, and as a result one needs to rethink and reformulate how to do this in accordance with the speed of such change.

This does contrast somewhat with what appear to be generally esteemed in modern Western society. Wealth, status and power have become powerful symbols. In contrast to this, none of the presently active participants in CBD whom I questioned all of whom admitted to sensations of transformations associated with the dance, mentioned any of the aforementioned 'benefits' as central to their own aspirations. When a person has not only satisfied some prior expectations, but has also gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do, and achieves something unexpected or even unimagined previously, the forward movement is characterised by a feeling of accomplishment. Accomplishment may involve closing a contested business deal, winning a prize at Blackpool or running a marathon, tasks which may not be pleasurable in the performance but which in fruition, in retrospect and in the memory of them may be felt as things one would like to do again since in the doing they have somehow raised one's self- esteem. Transformation itself might not be forever, but the memory of it often is.

Transformation can be pleasurable and/or enjoyable. Experiences that give pleasure, a passive sensation, can also give enjoyment, in which one is actively involved, but the two sensations are readily distinguished. A person can feel pleasure without any effort, whereas it is very difficult to enjoy a competitive enterprise, whether a business deal, a ballroom dancing competition or a marathon unless one's attention is fully engaged. In Csikszentmihaly's study he admits that he was very surprised to find how similarly very different activities were described when they were going well.

Another unexpected result for him was that regardless of culture, social class, age or gender, the respondents described enjoyment in very much the same way (1992:48) Csikszentmihaly has worked with many different groups to assess the body as a source of enjoyment, and dancers were among these. He has described dance as 'probably the oldest and most significant, both for its universal appeal and its potential complexity ' (1992:99). From isolated groups in Papua New Guinea to members of the Kirov Ballet, the response of the body to music is widely practised as a way of improving the quality of life. In his study of dancers the comments and feelings he elicited were very similar to what was said by the dancers that I met in my fieldwork. Examples of what were told me are:

Once I get into it, then I just float along, having fun, just feeling myself moving around.

I get a sort of physical high from it...I get very sweaty, sort of feverish or sort of ecstatic when everything is going very well.

You move about and try to express yourself in terms of these motions. That's where it's at. It's a body language kind of communicative medium, in a way when it's going good, I'm really expressing myself well in terms of music and in terms of the people that are out there.

As is also to be seen in the present study, the enjoyment of dancing in Csikszentmihaly's study group was often so intense that people would give up other options for its sake. I can mention two examples of this from the Oxford teams - one a law student who became so involved with dancing that she almost gave up her studies, the other a young woman who was very keen on politics and spent all her time at meetings and in organizing rallies. She decided to take up CBD in order to keep fit at University. It turned out, however, that her political meetings and her dance practice times clashed, so she gave up all her political ambitions and eventually was spending most of her spare time dancing. It would seem that she, too, like her team-mate, had discovered a 'form of exercise that also engages the mind'.

When survival demands are so persistent that a person cannot devote much attention to anything else, he or she will not have enough psychic energy to invest in flow-type goals. Csikszentmihaly claims that the 'forms of psychic entropy that currently cause us so much anguish- unfulfilled wants, dashed expectations, loneliness, frustration, anxiety and guilt, ...are all likely to be recent invaders of the mind (1992: 227).' He sees these phenomena as 'by-products of the tremendous increase in complexity of the cerebral cortex and of the symbolic enrichment of

culture' (1992: 227). Notably missing from my data are any accounts of the life-styles of the Oxford dancers once they had left university life. One could anticipate steadily diminishing participation in dancing as the stresses of 'real' life blended with gradual loss of youth and progressive physical deterioration. The Blackpool contestants, conversely, were more frequently without a compensatory occupation to fill their advancing years, and this is exemplified by the high proportion of professional dancers/teachers of ballroom dancing both among the contestants and in the audiences. It is possible to postulate that the flow experience would be likely to persist for longer, the feeling of transformation to recur more often in later life, among those one watched in Blackpool than among contestants on the universities circuit.

Yet further light is shed on the nature of flow in the results of a study by Csikszentmihaly commissioned by two centres concerned with the nature of the response of the non-specialist viewer to works of art. He showed that the similarities between the 'flow' and the aesthetic experience were more than mere analogies. The resultant book shed new light on an issue of great importance to art museums and art education - and coincidentally to the understanding of recreational physical activities. The research was focussed on people whose professions might give reason to expect them to be more or less highly skilled perceivers of art. Quoted in the book is a description of an aesthetic experience about which Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1787. Csikszentmihaly's transcription of what Jefferson felt on seeing Drouais's large canvas *Marius imprisoned at Minturnae*. goes thus: 'It fixed me like a statue a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, I do not know which, for I lost all idea of time, even the consciousness of my existence' (1990).

In a review in 1982 Monroe Beardsley singled out five recurring themes which can be compared to Csikszentmihaly's (1975) work in the following table:

CRITERIA FOR THE AESTHETIC	 	CRITERIA FOR THE FLOW EXPERIENCE
(BEARDSLEY)		(CSIKSZENTMIHALYI)

<p>OBJECT FOCUS</p> <p>Attention fixed on intentional field</p>	<p> </p> <p>MERGING OF ACTION & AWARENESS</p> <p>Attention centered on activity</p>
<p>FELT FREEDOM</p> <p>Release from concerns about past and future</p>	<p> </p> <p>LIMITATION OF STIMULUS FIELD</p> <p>No awareness of past and future</p>
<p>DETACHED EFFECT</p> <p>Object of effect set at distance emotionally</p>	<p> </p> <p>LOSS OF EGO</p> <p>Loss of self-consciousness and transcendence of ego boundaries</p>
<p>ACTIVE DISCOVERY</p> <p>Active exercise of powers to meet environmental challenges</p>	<p> </p> <p>CONTROL OF ACTIONS</p> <p>Skills adequate to overcome challenges</p>
<p>WHOLENESS</p> <p>A sense of personal integration and self-expansion</p>	<p> </p> <p>CLEAR GOALS, CLEAR FEEDBACKS</p> <p>AUTOTELIC NATURE</p> <p>Does not need external rewards, Intrinsically satisfying.</p>

Beardsley 1982: 288-289

Csikszentmihalyi 1977: 38-48

Comparison of Criteria Defining the Aesthetic Experience and the Flow Experience
(Beardsley 1982: 8)

The most likely way to account for this similarity is that philosophers describing the aesthetic experience and psychologists describing 'Flow' are talking about essentially the same state of mind (Beardsley, 1982). It might appear, then, that it is justifiable to interpret the experience of transformation in a strenuous situation, in sport, in ballroom dancing, or in other conditions where one's capacities are tried to the limits and the sensation of being 'out of this world' comes into play, as identical with or closely related to aesthetic rapture. In this initial research, because of the limitations of the study, the findings of the interviews cannot be seen as definitive, nevertheless, the tendencies gleaned from the questionnaires suggest that 'the aesthetic experience is related to other forms of enjoyable flow experiences, relying as it does,

on the use of skills, to match situational challenges, within a field of action delimited by clear goals and constant feedback' (Beardsley, 1982:114). Also like other flow experiences, it provides a sense of transcending everyday reality, a deep involvement with a more ordered and intense world. In spite of the differences in the training of the interviewees, the characteristics of the aesthetic experience were unanimously endorsed, although it also showed that their 'background and present involvement with art make a difference in terms of which aspect of the aesthetic encounter they respond to most' (1982:114). In short, one cannot expect the probability of flow in response to stimuli with which they are unfamiliar necessarily to be as great in dancers and others whose experience of it arises mainly from physical activities.

In the conclusion of his book Beardsley argues that *concentration* on the work is essential. Yet no matter how great the work is, it will not normally be able to engage the viewers as long as there are other works competing for his or her attention. Even if a work catches a viewer's eye, unless the person has an expertise or specific knowledge about the exhibit, 'few visitors plan to meet the challenges of the artwork, to wrestle with the meaning it contains' (1982:183). To develop fully the skills necessary for aesthetic interpretation is hard work. Even the experts found through their different training they could interpret it in a special way. All who had this experience felt that it is 'one of the most ingenious vehicles for making life richer, more meaningful, and more enjoyable' (1982: 83).

This whole argument is, of course, capable of being turned inside out. If the physical experience of transformation and that of the associated sense of flow are so closely similar to the aesthetic experience, which does not need physical expression, then surely the sensation provoked by a work of art ought similarly to be attended not only by the feeling of dissociation but by other components of transcendence, of flow. Much has been made of the feeling of timelessness common to both categories, but it does not seem as if this purely subjective phenomenon can in any sense be completely divorced from the plain fact that a sport, or a dance, or the management of a yacht, can ever be freed completely from its component of temporal duration. The question of whether the enthusiasm and loss of consciousness of Jefferson before Drouais's canvas would have been changed if the blowing of a whistle by a guard had signalled the imminent closure of the gallery remains open. So does the question of how Jefferson's emotions when faced with the canvas would compare with the excitement presumably felt by the painter while painting it - arriving at the

desired shade of pigment, at the precisely intended brush-stroke. It may even be doubted whether Beardsley when making the comparison would have agreed that his arguments would extend to sport. It would appear worthwhile to distinguish what may be regarded as two separate categories in flow, one active and the other passive - in our context, the experience of the dancers and that of those who watch them.

This is a broad question, which is in fact addressed by a variety of anthropologists at a variety of levels. It forms only part of the matter of performance as dealt with most comprehensively by Turner (1982), and Schechner (1985). Garry Marvin (1994), using a different terminology from that employed here, describes the feelings of and intentions of the *torero* (bullfighter) performing in terms of a mental state necessary for the creation of emotion in members of the audience through the expression of his own emotional commitment to his performance, and states that all the *toreros* to whom he talked spoke not about creating complementary emotion in the audience but of the need for the transmission of their own emotion. 'Technically brilliantly executed passes are not enough to move an audience; unless they convey a sense of emotional involvement they have a vital element missing and become mere gestures' (1994:169). Such observations do indeed link the aesthetic experience with the physical experience which induces it, and, though Marvin does not make the connection, they do appear to be closely related to the interplay between performer and audience as described by Turner and Schechner. He does, however, mention the part played by the ritual content of the entertainment, and cites the 'fixity, the public attention, the colour or excitement or solemnity that go with such performances' of ritual described by Gilbert Lewis (1980: 7), and the expectation in the onlookers that strictly ritual elements will not be omitted. It is worth reasserting here, that deviations in the ritual content in CBD, though sometimes acclaimed by onlookers, are almost always, dealt with harshly by the judges, the 'keepers of the flame'. The plot of the Australian film *Strictly Ballroom*, cited earlier, revolves around an amusing but touching and cogent instance of this. Significantly enough, as previously stated, that film is widely condemned by teachers and judges in professional CBD circles.

The responses of the onlookers at a ballroom dancing competition are overall less likely to be uniform and consistent than those at a bullfight, where most will be knowledgeable *aficionados* but unlikely to include a sizeable proportion of former *matadores* or other members of the *cuadrilla* or team (Marvin 1994). Audience involvement in the transformational aspect of CBD needs to be looked at less

exclusively from the standpoint of *aficionados*, however, than from the motives which have prompted individual members of the audience to be present. There can be no doubt that these do comprise a number of watchers devoted to the dancing, including a large proportion who may themselves be former competitors. I questioned representative samples of these, particularly in Blackpool, and in some cases their responses transcended what might be expected from persons who had never been themselves involved in competing at dances. An interestingly large proportion almost everywhere included close friends and relatives of the dancers, and though they did not appear to share the transformational experience of the present or the former performers their excitement was often considerable. Those least affected emotionally appeared, understandably enough, to be the judges. There was no sign, or even suggestion, that the emotions felt by the onlookers were deliberately transmitted to them by the performers to any stronger extent than what might be experienced, for instance, in watching the performance of a play, though this can be equated with the aesthetic flow described by Csikszentmihaly and Robinson (1990).

The presence among the audience of persons who must in the past have undergone the transformation described prompts further examination of the actual duration of the experience. Those former competition dancers questioned at Blackpool, where the phenomenon could have been expected to have reached its culmination, though recognising its occurrence as having happened to them when they competed, did not mention its recurrence when they were spectators. At that stage they seemed to have withdrawn from recapitulation of the original experience and while remaining enthusiastic supporters of CBD come to see themselves as critics and authorities, intermediate between participants and judges. In this position there was no longer a transmission to them of the excitement of the performers - it had become a case of- if the young only knew, if the old only could. It was only among the young that the awareness of the transformation was still lively, without any suspicion of how transitory it would prove to have been.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

The main aim of this study has been to examine CBD from an anthropological perspective. In order to do this, as I explain in the Introduction, it has been necessary to interrelate the interests of two academic disciplines, dance studies and anthropology. There are many published instances which show that this has proved very rewarding in the field of Third World anthropology, but little work relating to the less exotic and more urban field of CBD has so far been carried out. Patricia Penny (1997) having been a ballroom competitive dancer, in her doctoral thesis has discussed in detail the steps of CBD. As a non-dancer, although interested in the steps, style and so forth, I approached this work from an etic stance, feeling that the social space occupied by CBD called for a more objective analysis, and that it would be appropriate for me to concentrate on what such dance itself meant for the participants and the onlookers and the role it played in contemporary life.

As a doctoral student in anthropology, when planning the study I recognised the limitations of my knowledge and experience of dance and its setting, and put in order a scheme for remedying these shortcomings. Simple observation would not be enough; it would be necessary to start from the basics, even where I felt that as an observer I already had some grasp of these. I needed to learn more about present-day social dance, to supplement what little I knew with a firm familiarity with the realities of dancing, and especially competitive dancing. How this was partly achieved has been described in Chapter One.

That chapter gives an account of seriously learning to dance. I had no intention of becoming an expert, even just expert enough to be able emically to touch the fringes of competition. Attending those dancing classes not only enabled me to determine and analyse some of the motives with which I had started and which would later blossom into actual enthusiasm. From literature about learning to dance, at one level one could compare ballroom dancing classes to the more traditional ballet classes; some of the description of learning to dance by Salosaari (2000) and others, such as those former ballet dancers I met at University who said that much of the learning is done by repeating the same steps, and watching others dance, was particularly relevant. Later, however, on observing the Oxford students learning to dance, I saw more emphasis being placed on it as a sports and team event, especially in the

vocabulary used, although they too were encouraged to repeat the same required steps continually, to watch and copy more experienced dancers, and not to improvise on preferred steps.

Most of those attending dancing classes with me, professed rather familiar social purposes, often the need to be able to give a good showing on the floor when dancing at weddings or other social gatherings. Those who taught dance seemed to be more keen that we should learn what they wished to teach; their aim was that the students should learn to dance in order to obtain dance medals. These medals were of little value except as testimonials of minor achievements at lower levels, but if one went further they would help towards establishing the positions of professional dancers and those associated with them. None of the dancers I met in the two classes discussed in Chapter One expressed a serious intention of taking up ballroom dancing competitively.

I felt that it was important to establish the relationship entailed between the patterns of activity of the dance and the human body - in short, to determine the embodied content in dancing. For this, exploration of the literature on embodiment was required, and the method and the results of this are set out in Chapter Three . Prior to this I had seen the human body as a purely physical entity; however, it became clear that it is not only its form that is important but also that it is subject to the influences of its social and cultural surroundings. Dancers, whether dancing purely for social pleasure or competitively, or even on the stage, were striving for the ideal dance body and could be seen to be influenced by the persons and objects around them. Of course the results might differ in accordance with the type of dancing specifically favoured, but whatever this was there would be a degree of uniformity of effect produced by the uniformity of the movements and attitudes common to all types of dancing found in Western or Western-influenced societies.

It was also imperative that in this study I should pay attention to the competitive aspects of CBD. Competition in general was studied, as was its relevance to CBD. This was the part of the thesis in which the sporting aspects come to the fore. Comparisons were made with sport in such matters as how judgements were arrived at, how rules were applied, how spectators reacted and what was expected from the competitors. The results of competitions in CBD depend on the points allotted by judges, and these give an ostensibly quantitative value to their decisions. The variation of points awarded by individual judges has been made obvious in televised

dance competitions (2004 and 2005). This affected the whole of any of the competitions seen, and was recognized by dancers, judges and spectators alike but did not appear to dampen their enthusiasm for the event. The nature of competition, the motivations, and its consequences are one subject of Chapter Three, and of ethnographic discussion in Chapter Seven. The difference between competition between teams and individual pairs came into focus in Chapter Three.

As this form of dancing occurs in couples, in order to be a successful couple in CBD, looking for and obtaining an ideal partner is seen to be very important. In CBD much of the portrayal in dance suggests romance. In view of this comparisons were made between how social partners might be found in certain sections of Western society and how partners might come together in CBD. It was during my earlier life experience and the dance classes that my attention was drawn to the fact that one function of social dancing appeared to be bringing and holding couples together. When questioned, competitive dancers gave more emphasis to trust, courtesy, coöperativeness than to physical affinity, though a certain stress was placed, for the most obvious of physical reasons, on height. It was interesting and informative to compare the criteria demanded of a partner in advertisements in the dance press and at dance websites with the characteristics asked for in the Lonely Hearts columns in newspapers: an example given in the description in Chapter Four of how dance partners are sought points to the relative unimportance of characteristics popularly regarded as erotically important. Many of those who were partners in the university teams eventually had stable social relationships. This may have been due to the fact that the university dancers on the whole shared a variety of interests apart from dancing, while meeting through the Internet, like that through newspapers, was more catch-as-catch-can. In any case, there was no way of learning how permanent the latter types of partnering were, except, perhaps, by noting how often outstanding couples in the competitive field were husband and wife.

The popular idea of competitive ballroom dancers is of couples either very formally or rather ornately dressed. This and other conceptions of the competitive appearance (here called 'the Look') and its construction are described in Chapter Five. At the dance classes, students are urged to wear appropriate shoes, that is, to make sure that the shoes worn would not affect the dance movements adversely, or damage the floors, but there was little attention paid to what was worn otherwise. The dance students nevertheless took care with their appearance to the best of their ability, or at least so it seemed. This may have been spontaneous, or it may have been part of a

wish to avoid being conspicuous for undesirable reasons. When it came to competition, however, matters changed, different standards came to apply, and costumes varied between the styles, though the standards were maintained, in some contexts even more rigidly than at a social level. Costumes also varied roughly in accordance with fashion, and an account is given in the chapter of how this has been the case since the beginning of CBD in the 1920s and has developed since.

The appearance, or 'Look', of CBD seems rather strange when comparing it with social dance and regarding it from outside the activity. This even applied to those members of the Oxford team who were starting out on CBD. Nevertheless, when those students and I became more involved in competitions we realised what an important part it played. If one sees this activity as 'performance' (see Chapter Two) one comes to accept more readily that the clothes and general appearance, although connected to fashion, are part of the drama of this form of dance. The judges, other dancers and spectators have expectations that the performers will attempt to follow the example of those dancers at the top of the profession. Those dancers will not only be aware of the latest styles but often have access to those who can advise on how certain materials will help to improve the appearance of the dancer.

The long Chapters Six and Seven embrace the bulk of the remaining ethnographic content of the thesis. They consist of accounts of the Universities' competitive dance circuit, in which the primary approach to CBD approximates to that to sport, and of the Blackpool Dance Festival, the acknowledged high point of CBD at the international level. The necessary differences between the two approaches and their settings are compared and contrasted. Dancers on the Universities circuit are young people whose futures have already been determined by the training they are undergoing in professions and whose enthusiasm for CBD matches (and possibly exceeds) that felt generally for any amateur sport at which one is proficient (or aspiring to be) and has little bearing on one's future career. On the other hand, what is celebrated at Blackpool is essentially CBD as a career: a large proportion of the participants consists of professional dancers and dance teachers, and though the non-professional element is significantly present, and even includes some dancers also to be met on the Universities circuit, the impression received is that here the dance is a more central concern and to some seen as an art form rather than a sport.

In analysing how much the dancers' personalities and appearance, technical and artistic skill, body coordination, spatial forms, the performance area and the music

contributed to the emerging dance, I explored the differences between the Oxford approach and that of those who attended the Blackpool Festival. At Oxford, one was aware that the students felt that they should conform to the codified steps and yet probably wanted to be more innovative. Among some of the innovations they desired was their ideal choice of music to dance to, which did not usually concur with what was desired by the coaches. Also often the area in which the dancers performed was limited for the university contestants as they hardly ever danced in ballrooms. This was so in practising as well as competing, which meant that the dancers had to modify their steps to avoid bumping into each other, an activity was not only frowned upon by the dancing fraternity, but one which also caused them to lose their coordination, and to forfeit competition points if seen by the judges.

Included in this chapter are details of the ancillary services offered at the Blackpool Dance Festival and the part it plays in the life of the city itself. Blackpool has grown into a popular resort as well as the international centre for CBD, and the latter status is locally cherished while some aspects of the former tend to be played down. It was especially affecting to contrast the splendours of the Dance Festival with the pathos and shabbiness of a great part of the city at other times of the year. Facilities for the Festival extend into the marketing of a variety of goods connected with CBD, and during it the dance is of paramount importance. On the other hand the students had limited financial resources and CBD is of little importance to the settings in which it takes place on the Universities circuit: Oxford remains Oxford whatever the sport practised by its alumni/ae.

Once my data were assembled I was able to explore them and pick up threads of consequence, which provided a picture of CBD in more depth than any I had yet seen. I could relate my information and observation to certain subjects, which I saw as being of anthropological interest. The conceptual aspects of CBD have hitherto received little serious analytical attention, though I came persistently across indications that two were of especial consequence. An analysis of the joint ritual and performance aspects of CBD and their relationship with the descriptions in standard and authoritative writings on ritual and performance in general is given in Chapter Two and provides a fitting prelude to the subsequent chapters.

In CBD one of the many things that comes to one's attention is the styles of the dances, and how they are perceived by dancers and spectators. Of course style is not the same as ritual, although in ritual the actions may be and even may be

expected to be, highly stylised. There is the image of the Ballroom style, where all dancers should be gliding and dancing in a gentle manner, and essentially behaving and having an appearance of a by-gone time, while in the Latin style, dancers try to emulate what they see as a 'Latin' look and how Latin Americans might behave in dancing. In the 21st century these perceptions seem to be dated and out of touch, and yet for dancers and spectators alike this does not appear to be so, as they say that this is the way it has 'always' been. An unusual procedure in CBD is how the 'sacred' space of the performers becomes 'secular', when, in-between dance performances, the audience dance where the spectacle has taken place. The reason given for this is because CBD originated in social dancing, this too appears like a ritual, as I am not aware of this happening at other sporting or dance events. Included in this chapter was the attempt to look at the set practises associated with implicit and explicit beliefs, ideas, attitudes and sentiments.

I was also able, somewhat to my own surprise (though not that of such of my informants with whom I discussed it towards the end of my research) to uncover a further persistent underlying incentive in CBD allied to that in some other activities, and to suggest that this intangible phenomenon of what I refer to as Transformation (Chapter Eight) could, as Csikszentmihaly, Schechner and others have suggested, bear some relationship to aesthetic appreciation. This sensation of being overcome by a feeling of transcendence was familiar to an unexpectedly large number of my informants, and appeared in the case of CBD, as in certain sports, to relate more to physical accomplishment than to any recognised spiritual or imaginative phenomenon. It could not be associated quantitatively with the degree of success in competition, though it held a quality of accomplishment and there were indications that once it had been experienced it was consciously sought after.

The satisfaction I have derived from this study may itself be allied to the feeling of successful accomplishment that may come to even the least successful competitor in CBD. Nonetheless, I am aware of other aspects of this study that might have been explored and which I did not fully investigate. For instance, the subject of male/female relationships and gender issues in general covers too wide a field to be touched on other than where it impinged directly on CBD. In discussion with female dancers I asked about how they felt about the men always leading and appearing to take the decisions in the dance. The women answered, without exception; much to my surprise, that it was not a problem for them. Their aspirations seemed for the moment to be focussed only on the dance.

Another aspect that intrigued me was, given the alleged undercurrent of favouritism, who was the ideal dance person to win the competitions. As discussed earlier in this research a number of issues are involved here, a certain type of body and movement is seen as most acceptable to the judges. At each competition that I went to with the Oxford team all the judges were from the United Kingdom, and would expect what is regarded as particular of European-descent-type bodily behaviour especially in the ballroom-type of dancing. This may even be in the unconscious as well as conscious level of judgement. It was clearly (though not resentfully) articulated by one of my informants, an Afro-Caribbean, that this often excluded those from an African or Caribbean background. On the other hand it should be pointed out that one non-European group who have successfully challenged and won major dance events have been the Japanese. This might of course be because of the influence of British dance teachers, active in Japan, who encourage their pupils who encourage to dance in a British manner agreeable to the judges.

At Blackpool, however, the dancers at the highest level were encouraged to work around the codified steps, rather than to them, this gave the dancers the opportunity to show aspects of their personalities and influences which helped them to create their performances. Not only did some of the dancers come from abroad, but it was also the same for some judges and spectators, their life experiences could, or could not, affect how they perform and how they are judged. Interestingly, and unlike at Oxford, all the dancers that I spoke to at Blackpool liked the very old fashioned traditional music to dance to, even those from abroad, seeing it as part of the Blackpool experience.

At present the officials and judges of this type of dance are predominantly made up of an older white Westerners; whether unconsciously or consciously, there seems to be a stereotypical person thought by them best to be the winner. In fact I had predicted correctly, quite early in the series of the recent television programme 'Strictly Come Dancing', who might win the competition if her dancing came up to the required standard, as she seemed to fit all the apparent criteria for an ideal winner. She was an attractive woman who has a degree of poise and appeared to have a good rapport with her dance partner.

This brings me on to the next point, which was brought up by so many people about the dance competitions at all levels, as to who actually wins the competitions. At the

University matches it was normally dancers from Oxford, Cambridge or Imperial College who won. In discussion with students from other universities it was said that the students from the winning universities had more dancing experience, were better performers with excellent coaches, and took the competitions all more seriously, and certainly for the students that I talked to it was not an issue. The coaches at Oxford University told me that they were so glad not to be in the midst of the leagues of dancers outside the Universities because of the alleged cronyism, they obviously felt all was fair on the University circuit. It has to be said that even from my early research on my visit to the local authority school of dancing there was talk from the teacher about its 'being a jungle out there' on discussing CBD on the general circuit. . When I went to Blackpool and sat beside spectators who had been coming there for years to the events, most of whom had been competitive dancers in the past, one common statement was 'who wins is a political affair'. No one actually protests formally about an unusual judgement although the judges know by the response or lack of it by the spectators what is felt about their judgements. The judgement in CBD, as pointed out earlier, is not objective, not like in certain sports (if one is to regard CBD as a sport), where the first past the tape is the winner. Another matter of contention is, how is one to judge what is a good or a bad step, who looks best and who performs well. Such decisions are really all a matter of taste.

Of course there are restrictions inherent to this statement, inasmuch as, if a couple do not dance to the stipulated steps or perform well then they are unlikely to win an event. Nevertheless, if there are two or more couples who dance and perform at a high standard, how are judgements made? I have told how in Blackpool, while sitting next to a German coach she said to me, 'At Blackpool only Brits win'. Shortly after this, when I noted that an Italian couple had won an event, I commented upon this. Her immediate reply was 'Ah, but they were coached by a British trainer'. However, on further research, this has not actually been the case in the last few years especially since the participation of dancers from the former East European countries. Nevertheless in answering a questionnaire that I sent to a Former World Champion Ballroom Dancer who is now an International Judge, under the 'any other comments' section the judge replied 'When working with people it is difficult to avoid corruption,' but without stipulating precisely what he meant by this. In fact, allegations of corruption in sport have been made so commonly that they are no longer regarded as out of the way. Who, these days, can decide where cronyism begins and corruption ends?

Another comment that was often made was about who would make the ideal competitive ballroom dancer and, I believe, associated with this there might be perceived a class issue. The first comment I heard was from one of the administrators at the Ballroom Dance Council, he said that he had heard that an 'out of work plumber and a hairdresser' would typify the competitors. This is something that both Patricia Penny and I would disagree with. In her research she found that most of the competitors were in administrative-type posts. My main research populations were rather different from Penny's, and most students from Oxford University come from a privileged background, although it was interesting (not class related) to note how many of the dancers were from the science rather than the arts faculties. One wonders whether this is because they enjoy dancing to the prescribed steps, which might appeal to a scientific mind. There is no doubt in my own mind that they enjoyed the kind of competitive edge that this sort of dance brings with it. At my dance schools most of those learning were from professional/ administrative backgrounds. As for Blackpool, as far as I could tell there would be no competitors from the deprived non-working classes or holding poorly paid jobs. The main reason that I put forward this suggestion is that in order to be a successful competitive ballroom dancer you need not only to spend a lot of time, which could be ideal for an unemployed person, but there also needs to be a considerable financial commitment for this activity. Even being in the audience costs an appreciable amount. As discussed more fully earlier the cost of making 'the Look' expected of a top winner, even with corporate sponsorship, is not inconsiderable, so not for those without the financial means. Even at the university level several families that I met at the Oxford and Cambridge matches told me that they spent all their spare time, for those dancers without cars, ferrying the dancers to and from their venues. Often the dresses especially would be practically impossible to carry on public transport.

As for the class aspect of competitive dancing: there has always been a certain distinction between high and low art and popular culture. This is discussed at various points in the thesis, but turns out ultimately to be without major relevance to it. . As we know social dancing has been an activity enjoyed by most classes but the competitive side of dancing may still be associated in the popular mind with those people without money, as in the days of the economic depression. There also is the notion of a certain vulgarity in the form of dress and dance which is so far from the high art of ballet. Those looking on from the outside of CBD seem unable to be associated with what they see as an incredible appearance, on the other hand many of the dancers who have studied ballet as youngsters do not have this problem. It

seems to me that they regard the dressing up as part of the uniform of the competition, as with the clothes one would wear for a ballet performance or on the sports field. Certainly the dancers who took CBD most seriously felt that dress was a very important part of the performance, while those who did not want to dress in the expected way did not do so well in the competitions. There is also the notion that social dance is easy to do and therefore competitive dancing must be easy to do as well and so falls readily into the category of low art or a casual pastime.

This thesis is an anthropological exercise in which the object is to see how CBD comes about and how it affects the participants and their families. In discussion with the families of dancers both on the Universities circuit and in Blackpool it was noteworthy that on the whole they approved of and supported their children and siblings in this activity. This often meant spending weekends, even holidays, in attending competitions. Not only this but they would also give a substantial amount of financial support. I did ask several families from the University what it was about this activity that they approved of, one said that it really was a family occasion and that the younger boys saw it as a sports outing whereas the girls liked the dresses and watching the dancing. For Blackpool, the families that I spoke to, much of it was pride that now after many years the dancer, or dancers, had succeeded in being able to enter for The Festival. These families often took some of their annual leave in order to support their family members at the competition.

The attraction of CBD for the dancers is naturally at a different level. They spend a considerable amount of money and time in pursuit of this activity. On the whole it appears as though in the Western world women like dancing more than men do. In the groups that I studied there was a hint of a suggestion that they might be looking for the ideal dance partner who would sweep them off their feet. This did seem strange to me from a twenty-first century standpoint, but within these groups there also seemed to be need for a good recreational pleasure, which would help to keep them fit, and for many of course the pleasure of winning would be an extra bonus. The men, on the other hand, seemed not to be so keen on the idea of dancing at first. Initially, they came with friends to the practices, with the enticement that there were attractive and personable women there. However, when they became involved, if anything, they were more enthusiastic than the women. At Oxford they enjoyed being part of a team, and becoming very physically active and yet at the same time dancing closely with attractive women in an approved way in public – and maybe showing off.

Perhaps for me the surprise and the most interesting element of the thesis was to hear from so many different dancers about the feeling of transformation that they experienced when dancing well. Time after time it was clear that this was not necessarily associated with winning. These sensations have been mentioned in all levels of CBD, for example, Marcus Hilton, who is one of the most popular and accomplished dancers and who is a world champion, talked about 'The Magic of the Dance' at the World Ballroom Dancing Congress in Blackpool which I attended in May 1999. He used the letters of the word Magic and when the words were combined he claimed that they made the 'aura and essence of magic of the dance performance'. The words he used were M=Magnificence, A= Artistry, G=Glamour, I= Image and C=Charisma. He then asked the audience to 'sit back, open your ears and open your eyes and absorb the Magic during our performance' (1999:21). After the performance he and his partner were applauded enthusiastically.

Finally and analytically, it has been possible in this study to satisfy with regard to both the Oxford teams and the Festival at Blackpool all six of the rules set out by David Silverman (1993) for the interpretation of qualitative data. Care has been taken to avoid assuming that critiques amount to reasonable alternatives; the point of view of the person carrying out the action has nowhere been accepted as invariably the explanation for that action; the possible escape of phenomena has been taken into consideration; no choices have been made between polar opposites; where they have been presented, in no single instance has any element been assumed to be an explanation; and the cultural forms governing the accomplishment of truths have been respected.

This has revealed that in these circumstances at least a qualitative approach could lead to conclusions that approximated closely to those that could be derived quantitatively by Penny (1999). She concludes in her research that 'cbd remains accessible to people of every age and background ... Ballroom dancing performed in competition may be engaged in for the purpose of 'socialising', competing to win, or for the pleasure elicited from learning and performing...and that there has been no discontinuity in ballroom dancing in the last 90 years' (1999: 72). The latter has also pointed out the importance of the facts that sheer enjoyment on the part of the participants and onlookers is instrumental in its survival, as are the pleasure of knowing that one is engaged in what is seen as an aesthetic activity, and the

excitements engendered by the opportunity to mingle with people from different backgrounds united in a similar enthusiasm.

Competitive ballroom dancing may not be considered very important, in fact for many in Britain it is perhaps seen as a waste of time, nevertheless it gives a great deal of pleasure to people of all ages, and even an extra ingredient to their lives to those involved in it. As younger people are coming to have more leisure time and money, there seems to be a problem for some in how this is used: for example in the media there are often reports on binge drinking and unhealthy habits. I was told in conversation with a sociologist that in Sweden ballroom dancing has been added to the school curriculum, with the hope that it will reduce social and health problems in the younger population there. There have been movements among pressure groups in Britain to get government backing for a similar educational programme here.

Little attention has been paid to schoolchildren in this thesis, but there does appear to be a significant link between the age at which dancing is first taken up and competitive success on the dance floor. It is to be hoped that as CBD comes more and more to be recognised as a competitive sport it would add to the pleasure not just of those interested in sport but also help in the campaign for improving the fitness of young people. Very cogently, a distinct link may be emerging between youthful obesity and ill-health and the gradual loss of playing-fields and other facilities for exercise at schools, as well as of other innocent forms of physical exertion. If the losses can be compensated by the channelling of the energies of the young into a pastime as captivating and beneficial as CBD there might be great advantages to the community. It can be hoped that the popularity of the television programme *Strictly Come Dancing*, which has apparently increased the numbers going to dance classes, might contribute to a resurgence of such pastimes, coupled with a wider recognition of the emergence of CBD into a limelight almost as bright as that which at present illuminates so many sports. It may, however, be only a passing fashion; though it is more than four centuries since Sir John Davies sang to Queen Elizabeth I, herself an accomplished dancer, in his long poem *Orchestra: A Poem for Dancing*, that:

Time itself
Had not one moment of his time outrun
When out leapt Dancing from the heap of things
And lightly rode upon his nimble wings.

APPENDIX A

Dance Questionnaire

During my time with the Oxford teams they completed a questionnaire for me. 50 questionnaires were left to be completed and of these 34 were returned, 20 completed by women and 14 by men. After analysis of the data the results were:

Details of the dancers

Females.

Males

Mean age 20.6 Range 19-28

Mean age 20.6 Range 19-24

Colleges Represented

Over 20 colleges were represented. The largest groups came from Oriel and St Catherine's, that is 4 from each, and 3 from Keble.

Fields of Study

Sciences 16. Medicine 3. Arts 5. Geography 2. Engineering 2. Economics 2. Fine Art 1. Business studies 1. Politics and Philosophy. Theology and Philosophy 2.

What stages in studies

11 in their final year

11 had one more year to go

9 had two more years to go

3 had three more years to go

In many of the answers the students gave more than one reply to the questions, thus the reason for additional answers, which I felt were important to include in the analysis

Why did you choose to do competitive ballroom dancing?

Females:

Enjoy dancing 6

Enjoy competing 7

Love of dancing..("dancing love of their lives") 3.

Being a member of a team 3.

Dancing as a couple---only way to find a reliable dance partner. 2

Learn new skills

Enjoy graceful skills & music 1

Gives added confidence 1

New interest 1

Enjoys dressing up in competitions

Learns to dance to a high standard.

Males:

Learn dancing fast 1

To become involved in a committed activity at Oxford 1

Many friends do it in the USA, so wanted to do it at Oxford 1

Enjoys dancing & sport---so CBD good combination 2

Parents ballroom danced so wanted to try but on competitive side 1.

For social reasons 1

Learned to dance in Austria. Always been competitive in sport. This seemed fun 1.

A form of exercise plus good team spirit 1

Fun and the quickest way to improve one's dancing skills 1

Enjoy dancing and find myself much better at CBD than other sports 1

Impressed when saw others doing it & then got caught up in competition grip 1

Found it exciting so started for social aspects and also like sports 1

Something a bit different from past experiences plus good fun 1

How many years have you been ballroom dancing?

Female dancers Mean result 2.3 years. Range 3months –12 years

Male dancers Mean result 1.5.years. Range 3months –5 years

Have you danced other forms of dance before dancing for team?

Females: 11 have done ballet, 6 modern dance, 6 tap. 5 jazz, 4 contemporary, 3 disco, 2 Rock n Roll, the students also mentioned social Ballroom and Latin, country dancing, national flamenco, Indian, Chinese, classical Greek, salsa and meringue. 4 had not done any form of dance before starting CBD

Males: 13 had never danced before.1 had previously done country dancing at school

How do you feel when you dance well?

Females

Some of the women gave more than one answer to this question

17 said it was enjoyment in various degrees—words used were exhilarated, powerful, gives me a high, a buzz, light and fluid, creative, s sense of achievement, feel great—out of this world, like a complete person with lots of confidence, totally elated, radiant and happy, satisfied and relaxed, thrilled and excited, elated and want to do better

11 also gave reasons associated with competition –words such as like competing , doing well, always wants to do better

Other answers given to this question were that

4 felt it good to learn new skills

3 felt good being team members

1 enjoyed being in a sport

Males

Like the females the males also gave more than one answer

8 said it was enjoyment in varying degrees—words used euphoric, elated, really enjoy it, great fun keep wanting to do more, (7 out of 8 gave this response) feel excited, dance is my life, reinforced addiction.

7 enjoyed winning as part of a team

7 felt it was good to learn and be good at a new experience –this was very much associated with competition for 5 of the respondents

4 felt it was good to be proficient at another sport.

How do you feel when you dance badly?

Females:

Upset/frustrated 9.

Let myself & partner down 7

Disappointed 6.

Annoyed 5.

Irritated 2

Wasting my time 2.

Feel bad1. Angry 1. Not too good 1. Embarrassed 1

Males:

Frustrated 10

Motivated to do better 4.

Let team down 1

Indifferent 1.

What do you feel helps you to improve your technique?

Females:

Practice 14

Tuition 9

Self-examination and analysis 7

A good partner 5

Emulation 4

Males:

Practice 6

Tuition 7

Self-examination & analysis 6.

A good partner 2

Emulation 2

How important is the 'Look' to the dance in competitions, that is clothes, make up and so forth?

Females:

Very important 16 Not important 4

Physically improving 8 Not improving 12

Competitively 10 Not so competitively 10

Over-emphasised at the expense of dance Yes 4 No 16

Males

Very important 8. Not important 6

Physically improving 5. Not improving 9

Competitively 3 Not so competitively 11

Over-emphasised at the expense of dance Yes 6 No 8

What about the music? Do you prefer to dance to modern pop type tunes or are you happier with the standard ballroom music?

Females:

Liked both types, that is older standard music and pop music 7

Preferred modern pop music 6

Preferred older standard music 3

Preferred pop music for Latin and Standard music for Ballroom 4

One commented in addition that she could not bear to hear the same music over and over again.

Males:

Liked both types, that is, older standard music and pop music 4

Preferred modern pop music 6

Preferred standard 2

Commented never hear pop music 1

One said that he would not waltz to pop music, or go club dancing to a waltz.

In the section marked any questions or comments you want to ask me?

Out of 34 questionnaires only 5 responded apart from such comments as “Good luck with your research” and so forth.

(1)One said ‘I don’t trust the questionnaires of sociologists .Is it true that they pretend to be interested in one thing to distract you while they are really researching something else?’

(2)One asked ‘When you have been looking at dancers at Blackpool , apart from the standard of dance do we seem similar or are we way off the mark?’

(3)One said ‘I don’t think competitions are very important , but it is fun to beat Cambridge though.’

(4) ‘As you know people take this sport very seriously, and it seems to be much more emotional because people within the team itself must “compete” against each other. Also the nature of partnerships means that people who dance together have to be close emotionally. Both the best and worst part of this is the emotional demand - this is partially created by the fact that one always feels one is competing against one’s self, for a personal best, and because there is no objective standard.’

(This dancer went on to marry her dance partner—not the one we have already discussed)

(5) One young man said ‘I dance because I have to!!!’ Also that ‘The music is the fuel for my love of dancing’. (This dancer had never danced, apart from going to discos, until he took up this form of dancing at Oxford University and is now their most successful male dancer.)

As can be seen, the dancers did respond to the questions with quite a lot of frankness. However, I found that when they talked with me after competitions they

used even more effusive language when they won their heats, finals in competitions. Such terms as 'out of this world', 'magic', 'like flying' and by their body language they did seem to be on another plane after their dances. These are sophisticated young people, high achievers, and may have some reservations, or even difficulties, writing about how they feel.

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